

Victorian Election

"With public transport the big issue for many voters, the Public Transport Users Association (PTUA) has given its verdict on the transport policies of the parties going into the Election, with the Greens coming out on top, followed by the Coalition. PTUA President Daniel Bowen said that packed trains, slow trams, and infrequent buses had voters looking to all political parties for a solution to Melbourne and Victoria's transport woes. And he said the Green and Coalition promises for reform through an independent public transport authority were crucial in their party policies receiving the best marks."

"[Mr Bown said:] 'The Greens scored an A, and have an aggressive agenda to upgrade public transport, with a Public Transport Authority being central to better managing and planning the network. The vision of frequent public transport across Melbourne is welcome, and would provide more residents with a genuine alternative to car travel'. Of the two major parties, Mr Bowen said the Coalition had come out with a stronger set of policies than Labor, and scored a B. 'The Coalition has a number of positive policies, underpinned by a pledge to buy 40 additional trains, and introduce a Public Transport Development Authority to provide central management and planning. 'While we have concerns over the Coalition's push for the east-west cross-city road tunnel, the pledge of feasibility studies for rail to Doncaster, the Airport and Rowville, as well as level crossing eliminations are very welcome'. Mr Bowen said that Labor were promising some worthwhile upgrades, ultimately they fell short of what is needed, scoring a C. 'Labor seems to have no overall vision for a fast, frequent, connected network across Melbourne & Victoria, and have ignored community calls for a shakeup of the management of public transport, which has scores of organisations involved but nobody taking responsibility for such essentials as making sure buses meet trains'. Despite Labor deservedly trumpeting Smartbus as a success story, it was disappointing that they had not pledging any new Smartbus routes. Labor also lost points for continuing to push the destructive North-East freeway link."

"The PTUA rated the Democrats with a D, noting their pie-in-the-sky fascination for magnetic levitation (maglev) trains, and Family First with an F, for policies that were likely to lead to more car dependence and traffic. At the time of writing, DLP policies had not been published."

Ref: PTUA Website, 18/11/10

www.ptua.org.au/2010/11/17/election2010-scorecard/

'A' for Greens

"As would be expected, the Greens have an aggressive agenda to upgrade public transport, with a Public Transport Authority being central to better managing and planning the network. The vision of frequent public transport across Melbourne is welcome, and would provide more residents with a genuine alternative to car travel."

'C' for Labor

"A number of relatively small-scale worthwhile initiatives, but no overall vision for a fast, frequent, connected network across Melbourne and Victoria. Despite deservedly trumpeting Smartbus as a success story, pledging no new Smartbus routes at all (not even those previously announced and then cut back)."

'B' for Liberal/National Coalition

"A number of positive policies, underpinned by a pledge to buy 40 additional trains, and introduce a Public Transport Development Authority to provide central management and planning. While we have concerns about the plan for armed guards on stations at night, feasibility studies for rail to Doncaster, the Airport and Rowville, as well as level crossing eliminations are very welcome."

Ref: PTUA Website, 18/11/10

<http://www.ptua.org.au/election2010/>

"Which party is 'Better For' Improving Public Transport?"

2010	Oct 26/27	Nov 17/18
ALP	28%	27.5%
L-NP	37%	40.5%
Greens	10.5%	13%
Other	3.5%	1%
Can't say	21%	18%

This telephone Morgan Poll on important issues of concern to electors was conducted over three nights, November 16-18, 2010 with a Victoria-wide cross-section of 943 electors.

Ref: Roy Morgan Research, 19/11/10
www.roymorgan.com/news/polls/2010/4605/

And Also ...

"Traffic noise has become a soundtrack for the lives of many residents", [Boroondara] mayor Jack Wegman said. 'Sometimes it's so bad people can't sleep. They keep doors and windows shut to block out the sound. They don't socialise at home because the backyard barbecue becomes a shouting match over cars and trucks'."

Ref: Clay Lucas, The Age, 18/11/10

Brisbane's Oil Addiction

"Brisbane's morning peak hour now starts at 5am, two hours earlier than it did eight years ago, a planning conference was told yesterday. Qld Department of Main Roads policy and planning deputy director, Mark Cridland, told the City of the Future conference at Parliament House the 2002 peak hour was 7am to 8am. In 2004, the peak was between 6am to 7am, but by 2008 it had moved forward to between 5am to 6am. Mr Cridland said Brisbane motorists refused to move closer to public transport hubs or change the way they travelled. 'So what does this tell us? We have a deeply entrenched car and suburban life culture'."



Toy Truck Protest

Photo: Rebecca Hallas, The Age, 18/11/10

"Mr Cridland linked this to a big increase in the number of cars owned by families in Brisbane's outer suburbs and the fact public transport was geared to taking people in and out of the Brisbane CBD. 'The number of three-car households in southeast Queensland increased by over 50% in 20 years'. At the same time, SE Queensland's population grew by 46% to 2.3 million. The federal government earlier this year found the cost of traffic congestion would increase in Brisbane from \$1.2 billion to \$3 billion a year by 2020. While public transport now provided the bulk of transport in and out of the CBD (73%), it was unsuitable for other trips around the southeast corner. While only 28% of people used their car to drive in and out of the CBD, more than 70% of drivers used their cars and work vehicles to travel around the SE corner. 'What about the other 72% [of journeys] not going into the CBD? 'Well, 92% of them are by car'. Qld's love affair with the car was caused by urban sprawl and increasing wages which made cars and work vehicles cheaper. Fifty years ago, 60% of Brisbane's traffic travelled less than 10 kms to the city for work. Now, less than 10% of Brisbane's traffic drives less than 10 kms from the CBD."

Ref: Tony Moore, Brisbane Times, 16/11/10

"Australia is dealing with inner-city traffic congestion in reverse gear. ... Motorists should get free use of bypass toll roads and should pay to drive in the inner-city. 'Our logic is wrong because we charge people to travel on the new roads or bypasses that we want them to use, while drivers travel for free on congested inner-city routes. Instead, we should be looking at charging on these congested routes and using that revenue to fund or subsidise public transport and roads'. ... Stockholm's congestion charge had not only reduced traffic entering the city by up to 22 per cent, it had also reduced carbon emissions by 13 per cent in the inner city, and 2.7 per cent in greater Stockholm, a city of just under one million."

Ref: AAP, Brisbane Times, 17/11/10

Replacing Oil

"The world will run out of oil around 100 years before replacement energy sources are available, if oil use and development of new fuels continue at the current pace, a US study warns.

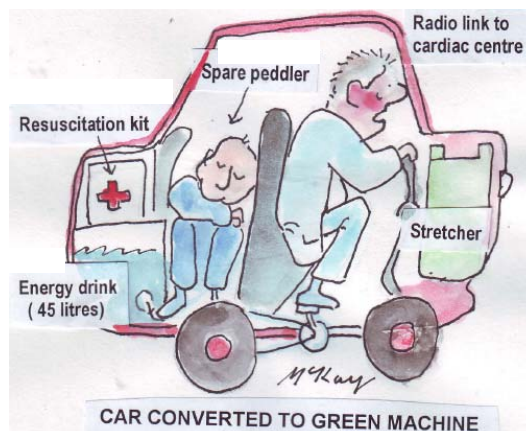
Researchers at the University of California, Davis (UC-Davis) used the current share prices of oil companies and alternative energy companies to predict when replacement fuels will be ready to fill the gap left when oil runs dry. And the study's findings weren't very good for the oil-hungry world.

"If the world's oil reserves were the 1.332 trillion barrels estimated in 2008 and oil consumption stood at 85.22 million barrels a day and growing yearly at 1.3%, oil would be depleted by 2041, says the study published online last week by Environmental Science and Technology. But by plugging current stock market prices into a complex equation, UC-Davis engineering professor Debbie Niemeier and postdoctoral researcher Nataliya Malyshkina calculated that a viable alternative fuel to oil will not be

available before the middle of next century. ... Their calculations show that there would not be a widely available replacement for oil-based fuels before 2140, which, even if the more optimistic date of 2054 for oil depletion is retained, would mean there could be a gap of around 90 years when it might be difficult to run a motor vehicle. Nearly two-thirds of crude oil is used to produce gasoline and diesel to run vehicles, said Malyshkina. The researchers' calculations were based on the theory that long-term investors are good predictors of when new technologies will become commonplace. ...

"But all is not doom and gloom, says the study. On the oil supply side, consumption could well decrease in future as more energy-saving measures are introduced and used by consumers, and new oil reserves could become available as extraction techniques improve."

Ref: Karin Zeitvogel. The Age, 16/11/10



How Deadly is Diesel? (Part 6)

"Only two diesel-powered cars have made it into the Green Vehicle Guide's top 100: The BMW E87 1 Series 120d and the Volkswagen Golf. It's their air pollution rating that lets them down - while diesels are more fuel efficient, they also spew out pollutants such as soot, sulphates and hydrocarbons.

"The NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) says 24% of soot particles in Sydney's air are produced by motor vehicles. 'Of this, up to 80% comes from diesel emissions, even though diesel vehicles account for only 15% of vehicle kilometres travelled', states the DECC's Action for Air Plan. The soot particles, also referred to as particulates, are a health hazard because they can lodge in the lungs when inhaled and cause problems. A paper from the Victorian Environmental Protection Agency, released in 2002, found that 'numerous studies have linked elevated particle levels in the air to increased hospital admissions, emergency room visits, asthma attacks and premature deaths among those suffering from heart and respiratory problems'. The same paper also lists arsenic, benzene, formaldehyde and nickel as other chemicals contained in diesel exhaust that are of concern to human health.

"The US Environmental Protection Agency has also investigated, and their study goes into a litany of concerns about diesel exhaust, coming to the conclusion that 'diesel exhaust is likely to be carcinogenic to humans by inhalation'. That being said, no one recommends you go around inhaling the exhaust of a petrol-driven car either! Both kinds of fuels create a toxic mix of gases as they are burned. Diesel, however, has one other downside when compared with petrol: it's a little group of compounds called nitrogen oxides (NOx's). These are found at higher levels in diesel exhaust than petrol and, when the sun hits them, they create smog. 'It's really a gimmick to suggest that diesels are helping with the climate problem', says Mark Jacobson, a professor of civil and environmental engineering at Stanford University in the US, who is also an expert in soot pollution. Jacobson's biggest concern is that the soot released from diesel engines - as well as being a recognised health issue - is also contributing to global warming. 'Black carbon [soot] causes about 300,000 times more warming than the same mass of carbon dioxide', he says. The effect of soot particles on the climate 'far overwhelms' the reduction in carbon dioxide emissions, he adds.

"Because of the health implications, the government regulates the amount of soot emitted from cars. To meet these emissions standards and to counteract the concerns about soot particles belching out of the exhaust pipes of cars, many modern diesel engines contain filters that are designed to strain out the worst of the pollutants. And as of this month, all new European-imported diesels will be subject to the more stringent EU5 standard, which requires a reduction of diesel particulate emissions by between 80 and 90% of the current EU4 standard, a standard is met by most Australian cars. And the coming EU6 standard will also address the emission of nitrogen oxides. 'The NOx emissions required under the EU6 standard are almost on par with petrol engines', says BMW spokesperson Tim James. Adding a filter reduces health impacts, but it also causes a reduction in mileage because of the additional fuel required, Jacobson says. 'It's generally around three to eight per cent additional fuel use to run [them]'.

"But those in the industry argue a filter doesn't significantly impact the overall efficiency of a diesel. ... Using high-efficiency filters that meet the EU5 standard means 'you could say with some confidence that [particulate] emissions are probably on par for diesel and petrol engines'..."

"These days many auto manufacturers are turning towards more 21st century options, including hybrid petrol-electric vehicles and fully electric cars. Toyota, a well-known proponent of hybrid cars, believes that 'within the next five years...small passenger car diesels will begin to disappear as their ability to meet [emissions standards] will become prohibitively expensive and will no longer make it economical to build small diesel', says company spokesman Mike Breen. 'We believe hybrid vehicles will continue to develop and will form the basis of the ultimate eco-car'.

"Stanford University's Jacobson drives a car. He recently upgraded from a hybrid to a totally electric vehicle. 'Battery electric vehicles are so much more efficient than internal combustion engines', he says. 'Of the electricity you put into an electric vehicle, 80 to 86% of it is converted to work to move the car. If you compare that to a diesel or gasoline vehicle, only about 17 to 20% of the fuel that you put into the tank is converted to work'. Modern diesels may be able to perform like race cars while being more efficient than their petrol counterparts, but at the end of the day they're not necessarily eco-saviours."

Ref: Sara Phillips, G-Online, 13/9/10



Problems with Tar Sands (Part 6)

"The State Department's own Environmental Impact Statement noted that the locations of greatest concern for potential oil spills would be in environmentally sensitive areas, especially wetlands, flowing streams and rivers, and water intakes for drinking water or commercial and industrial users. The Keystone XL pipeline would pass over the deep end of the largest underground aquifer in the United States, which supplies water to 2 million people and is critical to the region's agricultural economy. Even a small spill in this part of the country could have disastrous consequences on the economy, the environment, and public health. TransCanada's pending request to use thinner pipeline for the Keystone XL project through areas it deems 'low consequence' seems especially ill timed in the wake of the Deepwater Horizon disaster. Our risk tolerance should be extremely low, and our consideration should be complete. A hurried approval of the Keystone XL pipeline would also undercut the administration's larger vision of finally, after decades of promises from our leaders, making the investments and the hard decisions to take advantage of clean, domestic energy sources that are waiting to be tapped.

"As progressives, environmentalists, and now even economists and national security experts agree, the benefits of transitioning away from fossil fuels towards clean, sustainable sources of energy go far beyond climate change mitigation. We have an opportunity to create millions of new jobs worldwide, deploy new sources of energy that are clean and domestically produced, and free ourselves from chasing resources that distort foreign policy priorities and drain investment away from challenges like global poverty and disease. The United States and Canada should cooperate to build this future together. The disaster in the gulf reminds us every day – as it will for some time to come – that we can and must do better. The oil industry is extracting oil from sources that are harder and riskier to access, and where a one-in-a-million failure, even if that is an accurate risk assessment, nevertheless has huge, unaffordable consequences.

"Instead of pursuing energy sources that will perpetuate this legacy, the United States and Canada should join in partnership to put in place clean energy policies that will help us harness sources of energy that will never run out and can't risk catastrophe. As President Obama said in Ottawa last year, as two of the wealthiest countries, we can and must be leaders. Energy security is now intertwined with climate and economic security – all of which will be improved by reducing our dependence on oil and accelerating our transformation to clean energy. President Obama and Prime Minister Harper have already prioritized this by setting up a Clean Energy Dialogue last year, and two months ago Secretary Chu and Minister Prentice signed a Declaration of Intent that will deepen collaboration across a number of research areas. Our two countries should continue to aggressively work together to leverage our unique relationship and devise solutions to the full range of energy challenges our future demands. I'll

end by thanking you for having me here today and expressing the hope that individuals and groups with differences of opinion will communicate and cooperate to the fullest extent possible. Transitioning to cleaner sources of energy isn't a zero-sum game. We should aggressively seek new opportunities as we attempt to strike the right balances between the environment, the climate, our security, and our economy."

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

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

"As the Bishop of the Diocese of St. Paul in north-eastern Alberta, it is my responsibility to provide moral advice and leadership on questions that affect the faithful who live in my diocese. It is therefore impossible for me to ignore the moral problem created by the proposed one hundred and fifty billion dollars oil sands developments in the Municipality of Wood Buffalo because these projects are in 'my own backyard', and have aroused strong ethical criticism. ... All of the oil sands leases slated for development are in terrain classified as boreal forest. This type of ecological site is environmentally valuable because it has the unique ability to store large amounts of carbon in its bogs, peat, soil, and trees. The destruction of boreal forest reduces the earth's capacity to store carbon and releases greenhouse gases into the atmosphere as it is destroyed. ... Two to four and a half barrels of water are required to produce a barrel of oil from oil sands. This water is used to create the slurry of bitumen and oil that is heated and processed. Much of this water is recycled. The process used at the Syncrude oil sands plant recycles water a total of eighteen times and in the past twenty-five years has reduced water usage per barrel by 60%. Also, approximately 35% of the water used in processing bitumen is returned to the water cycle through evaporation. Despite impressive recycling efforts and improvements, for every barrel of oil produced approximately one barrel of water is contaminated in the process and deposited into a tailings pond."

Ref: Bishop Luc Bouchard, 25/1/09

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

China Crisis

"The number of vehicles on China's roads will more than double to at least 200 million by 2020, a top official was quoted on Monday as saying, further straining the nation's environment and energy supply. China must make it a top priority to develop fuel-efficient and alternative energy cars, the China Securities Journal said, citing Wang Fuchang, vice minister of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology. China's auto sales hit 13.64 million units last year, overtaking the United States as the world's top car market, while sales this year are forecast to hit 15 million units. As of the end of 2009, there were 76.2 million vehicles in the country, according to government figures. China's auto sales have slowed in recent months, partially due to seasonal factors, but August saw a surprising 55.7 per cent year on year jump, boosted by Beijing's new subsidies for energy-saving vehicles. The surging car use has brought mounting concerns over pollution, soaring energy demand, and traffic gridlock. A top official with the country's environment minister, Liu Ziquan, was quoted on Monday as saying vehicle exhausts had overtaken other major sources as the top cause of air pollution in cities. Road congestion has also worsened, highlighted by a recurring traffic jam dozens of kilometres long on a major highway leading into Beijing from the northwest."



Ref: AFP, The Age, 6/9/10

"[This] motorway, part of the Beijing to Tibet expressway, resembles a giant car park – and has done so for the past 10 days. Normally one of the busiest – and noisiest – trunk roads in China, now the only sound that can be heard is the chirrup of the crickets in the nearby wheat fields. The Chinese authorities are struggling to clear the congestion, now entering its eleventh day and which, at its peak, stretched for more than 60 miles (100km). But the drivers still joining it are not optimistic about reaching their destinations swiftly. 'I have not moved for five hours', said Zhang Xingping, 27, standing outside his cab near a road traffic sign mockingly warning him to obey the 100km per hour speed limit. A combination of

road works and the huge volume of coal trucks that daily rumble along this main route is said to have caused the problem. ... This particular and spectacular jam began on 14 August. At one point vehicles were moving half-a-mile a day with some drivers taking five days to clear it. ... China's state media reported the authorities were trying to ease the congestion by allowing more trucks into Beijing, especially at night, and asking trucking companies to suspend operations or take alternatives routes. But even as that was announced, reports were of more congestion, this time on surrounding roads as drivers tried to avoid the jam."

Ref: Jonathan Watts, Guardian, 24/8/10

Chances of Dying in a Plane Crash

"Arnold Barnett, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Sloan School of Management and a researcher on aviation safety, calculated that the odds of dying on a scheduled flight in first world countries such as Canada and Japan are one in 14 million. But he found that flying in emerging nations such as India and Brazil leads to a one in 2 million chance of death per flight. Lesser developed countries, such as many found in Africa and in Latin America, were found to have a crash rate of one in 800,000. Barnett, who based his findings on air safety data, said Nigeria had an especially poor safety record."

Ref: Reuters, The Age, 6/9/10

More on the Fast Train

"Don't forget Qantas was involved in one of the earlier fast train incarnations - there are great benefits for them and the train to have them on board, and they (or airlines in general) should be considered part of the alliance in any future project. They bring all their skill in yield management as well as potential for seamless ticketing options bridging air and fast rail for those with airline tickets involving MEL-SYD or CBR. Part of the solution as others have commented is use the train to reduce the number of low passenger volume take-offs and touch-downs at our major airports - ie little planes that fly most of the Canberra-Sydney schedule, and to those regional towns along the way. The train must link CBDs and their airports - primarily to reduce aircraft movements, not to provide a CBD-airport commuter service. The latter is a much needed side benefit."

Ref: Comments, SMH, 22/9/10

"Not sure if anyone mentioned Taxi drivers.... you think the airlines will get upset...wait to the cabbies, block centre cities in Melb and Syd, complaining about it taking fares away from them which for me in St Kilda East can cost around \$90 one way ... and if I don't keep an eye on them they always try to take me the longer more expensive way! Bring on the fast train..."

Ref: Comments, SMH, 23/9/10

Liquefied Natural Gas Ferry Contract for Tasmanian Firm

"Incat has secured a contract to build the world's first liquefied natural gas-fuelled fast ferry. ... The 99m high-speed ferry, with capacity for more than 1000 passengers and 153 cars, will be built for delivery in 2012. ... 'The emissions that come from LNG contain much less carbon dioxide', [company chairman Bob] Clifford said."

Ref: Blair Richards, The Mercury, 19/11/10

London Road Works

"Boris Johnson today blamed Margaret Thatcher for turning Britain into one of the most 'roadwork afflicted nations in the world'. The Conservative mayor of London made his comments on the day a new scheme was launched in sections of the capital that will force utility companies wishing to dig up London's roads to apply for a permit scheme to ensure they 'share trenches' with each other in a bid to minimise traffic disruption. Johnson hopes the move will reduce from 300,000 the number of holes dug each year, which he says are responsible for 36% of traffic delays in the capital and cost business little short of £1bn. Johnson described the system that allows different utility companies to dig up roads 'without warning and without so much as a by your leave' as a 'disgrace'. He wrote: 'I am afraid it all goes back to Mrs Thatcher. She decided - entirely reasonably - that these new concerns should be given every possible help in maximising efficiency and delivering services. So they were given quite amazing powers to dig up the road.' ...

"Johnson said: 'This significant step shows London has got serious about dealing with the nonsensical situation of companies being able to simply turn up and dig without a care in the world for the consequences. ... The mayor highlighted the limits of the permit scheme in his Daily Telegraph column: 'You will see the flaw. Suppose you have a two-week job and you want to make sure your diggers get it done without incurring any fines. What do you do? You apply for a four-week permit, don't you? That means your boys can have a full fortnight of making tea and staring at the hole – or rather, they can have a full fortnight in which they go off and do a different job, leaving the hole untended and the drivers bending their steering wheels in frustration'. The Department for Transport said a lane-rental scheme for utilities digging up the most sensitive routes was already under consideration."

Ref: Hélène Mulholland, Guardian, 10/1/10

Unfair Parking Subsidies

"When I lived in Perth a few years ago, my employer (a large multinational) relocated most of its workforce from the suburbs to an office tower in the CBD. As there were not enough parking spaces under the building for all the employees, the corporation decided to reimburse parking expenses incurred at commercial parking stations. As I do not agree with the idea of driving more cars into already congested cities, especially where good public transport is available, I requested that the corporation pay for my bus fare instead. The response was a firm 'No way!' on the grounds that this would be a precedent for the company. This is a good example of a lose-lose-lose situation: I lost because I had to pay my own bus fare; the shareholders lost because parking subsidies cost between five and ten times the cost of public transport subsidies (depending on where the employee lived); and the environment lost because more cars were on the roads."

Ref: Paul Flint, National Interest, ABC Radio National, 8/11/10

www.abc.net.au/rn/nationalinterest/stories/2010/3057010.htm

And Also ... 'Keeping Left' in the US

A consequence of planning for auto-domination is that ever more devious means are developed to try and keep traffic moving. This little beauty is known as a 'Double Crossover Diamond (DCD) Interchange' where vehicles are directed to the 'wrong' side of the road.



First US DCD Interchange in Springfield, MO.

Ref: Alternative Intersections/Interchanges,
US DoT. April 2010