

Cycling Increase in Australia

"2010 has continued a decade of dominance with bicycles outselling cars each year for the past decade by over 2,000,000. Over 11.5million bikes were sold in that time. Selling over 1.3 million bikes in 2010, the Australian bicycle industry is now showing clear signs of returning to its record levels of 2007. These figures represent a 12% increase from the previous year and a 67% increase from 2001. The sales of bicycles are supported by figures released by the Australian Government indicating a 32% increase in people choosing to ride a bike in the same period, Australians are choosing the bicycle for transport, recreation, fitness, general health and sport in increasing numbers. The choice to ride a bicycle is increasingly broadly based across the entire population; it's not just the domain of the fit, the fast or the sporty."

"With the community's support for and participation in cycling and the benefits extending to the economic, health, environmental and social arenas, there are strong arguments for the government to do more to support it. The recent release of the National Cycling Strategy 2011-2016 by the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport shows the time is right for the federal government to commit more funding to achieve its objectives. Signed by all federal, state and territory transport ministers the National Cycling Strategy aims to double the rate of cycling by 2016. Federal leadership and increased investment in infrastructure, educational and promotional programs will be needed however if this goal is to be achieved. [We applaud the] federal commitment to the national AustCycle program which will encourage more Australians to acquire the skills they need to cycle safely, but there's more that needs to be done."

"The Australian Government is facing critical decisions on key transport issues. In 2005 the cost in lost productivity through transport congestion was \$9 billion per year, forecast to grow to \$20 billion per year by 2020. We are facing an obesity crisis, the average Australian would get their daily requirements of physical activity if they walked, rode a bicycle or caught public transport to work. The use of bicycles for transport, recreation and fitness continues to have increasing benefits to the Australian economy and these will continue to increase as bicycle sales continue to grow. The Cycling Promotion Fund calls on the Federal government to invest in support of the increasing numbers of Australians who are voting with their feet and choosing to ride a bicycle."

Ref: Cycling Promotion Fund Release, 5/1/11

Making Public Transport Difficult

"Debate has flared over why commuters are being forced to walk to the outer reaches of [Melbourne's Tullamarine] airport, near terminal four, to catch suburban buses. The buses were shifted from the central terminal two location when SmartBus route 901 – which does a 115-kilometre 'orbit' of the metropolitan area from the airport to Frankston – was added in September. Airport spokeswoman Carly Dixon said the state government ordered the change. 'We made no request to move the bus services down to terminal four'. But a senior transport source insisted the airport had requested the move. The source also said the airport sought payment for every passenger using the orbital bus service in return for giving it a more central base. A Transport Department spokeswoman said: 'SmartBus route 901 currently stops near terminal four due to congestion and stopping-time constraints at terminal two ... The department will keep all public transport buses together at terminal four while we work with the airport to plan the future of all airport bus stops'."

Ref: Jason Dowling, The Age, 10/2/11

And Also ...

"Many automated ticket machines in Phaic Tân require you to haggle. Here is how it works. The machine will demand 100p. Press the button marked 20p. The machine will counter offer, somewhere between 60-80p. Lift your offer to 40p. If it sticks to 70p or above pretend to walk away or try your luck with another machine."

Ref: Phaic Tân, Jetlag Travel Guide, Hardie Grant Books, 2004



Haggling with Myki

Transport Productivity

"The Council of Australian Governments now has almost 80 unresolved problems on its books. Lurking amongst them is the heavy cost of further investments in large road projects versus the economic and social benefits of rail. Both Infrastructure Australia and COAG have to recognise that, despite the power of the roads lobbies, rail is much cheaper to power, puts out minimal pollution, has a small land footprint, and is up to 50 times less likely (depending on configuration) to cause deaths and injuries per tonne of passengers and freight carried."

"These critical infrastructure advantages are lost on roads engineer, Dr John Cox. Like the NRMA, the RACV, and the state roads departments, Dr Cox is determined to advocate more motorways and freeways slicing through Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, etc. This ignores the numerous recent studies by the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, the Victorian Metropolitan Transport Forum, and Professors Bill Russell, John Stanley, and Henry Ergas, demonstrating that many large road projects have negative returns."

"Dr Cox promotes the recommendation of Sir Rod Eddington for another freeway spearing through Melbourne from east to west. He omits to add that an appended study to the Eddington Report indicated that for every \$1 spent on this project the return would be only 50 cents. The same negative returns apply to the recommended extensions and bulking up of motorways in Sydney, such as the M2 project. This is the case with most freeway and motorway projects in Australia when costed for induced further traffic, increased congestion at entrance and exit zones, and increased fuel bills, health and hospital costs, land alienation, and pollution."

"As China, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, and the US Transport Department have come to realise, road transport is great for holidays and visiting friends, but it is a hugely wasteful means of distributing daily commuters and large freight tonnages. The single-occupant motor vehicle (90% of peak traffic) is economically the most inefficient transport mechanism ever devised. Compared with trains which can handle 1000 commuters each, trams with 240, and buses with 40 to 80, private cars eat money, time, and government budgets. As Professor Henry Ergas has written, when government projects are uneconomic the public loses twice. Firstly, because scarce capital is misapplied, and then because taxes are required to finance the losing projects, often distorting behaviour, at a significant cost to the community."

"Professor Stanley has estimated the total annual costs of road transport at \$40 billion. This compares with the \$16 billion raised through petrol excise, registration and other charges; an annual road transport deficit of \$24 billion. Professor Ross Garnaut has recently chided the government sector for losing the plot on productivity measures. Per head of population, both GDP and productivity are going backwards."

"Both COAG and Infrastructure Australia have the chance to redeem this situation by diverting scarce funds from inefficient freeway and motorway projects to higher speed and more frequent passenger and freight rail. The passenger target should be for a mode shift of 40% of commuters to train, tram, and bus (presently about 10%), as in some Canadian cities. Faster connections between regional cities and capitals would assist this development. The costs savings from shifting road freight to rail has been estimated to save the overall economy \$27 a container. Over 10 years, with a modal shift of 33%, the savings would run into hundreds of billions. Those who doubt that rail can work should take a trip on the fast train from Madrid to Seville. It has almost put airline traffic between those cities out of business."

Ref: Brian Buckley, Financial Review, 24/1/11

Garbage Pipes are Councillor's Dream

"Underground garbage pipes would be installed throughout the CBD and Docklands under a proposal from Melbourne Council's planning chair Peter Clarke. Cr Clarke, who saw the system at work in Barcelona and London on a recent ratepayer-funded trip, said the pipes would remove the need for noisy garbage trucks clogging up streets and get rid of open bins in the city's laneways. 'Installation requires digging up the street to lay 500mm pipes. We could start with Swanston St during the works next year (2011) and roll it out from there', Cr Clarke said."

Ref: Perry & Associates Newsletter, February 2011

Problems with Trucks

"Statistics ... show that crashes involving heavy vehicles led to 60 deaths in Victoria in 2010, a 50% increase from the 40 in 2009. ... Of the 60 people killed by heavy vehicle collisions last year, 11 were truck drivers, 20 were car drivers, 14 were passengers, five were motorcyclists, five pedestrians and five were cyclists. Twenty-seven of the crashes were in metropolitan Melbourne."

"Professor Bill Russell, deputy director of Melbourne University's Australasian Centre for the Governance and Management of Urban Transport, said Australians would be safer if more freight was moved by rail. But instead, the number of trucks on the roads was increasing rapidly while rail's share of cargo was decreasing. His research showed that moving 10% more freight by rail would save 25 lives in Australia every year, and 100 serious injuries such as quadriplegia or brain damage 'It is really important that we try to transfer many categories of heavy freight to rail and we need stronger policies to do that', he said. ..."

"About 330 people are killed in Australia each year because of heavy vehicle accidents. The chairman of the Australian Trucking Association, David Simon, said that many crashes involving trucks were not the fault of the truck drivers."

Ref: Maris Beck, The Age, 2/2/11

The Robin Hood of New York

"New York's transportation chief ... Janette Sadik-Khan's brilliant marketing of sustainable transport (dedicated bike lanes, cycle sharing, even pedestrianising Times Square) has transformed New York. ... Sadik-Khan's job is broadly equivalent to that of Transport for London chief Peter Hendy – only bigger (besides the road system, she is responsible for many of the bridges and tunnels into Manhattan from the other city boroughs, as well as the Staten Island ferry and more). ..."

"New York is in the middle of the same transformation of the philosophy of what urban public space is for that London underwent during Ken Livingstone's mayoralty. And Sadik-Khan, armed with [Mayor Bloomberg's] blueprint for a greener city, PlaNYC, has been the key player in delivering this new New York. Just as in London, a radical shift in priorities – though Sadik-Khan would never put it this way, a 'Robin Hood strategy' of robbing road space and investment from the transport-rich (ie, motorists) to pay the transport-poor (ie, public transport users, cyclists and pedestrians) – has been brilliantly marketed as 'what's best for business'."

"Congestion – sclerotic [becoming rigid and unresponsive] city arteries clogged with traffic – is economically inefficient; ergo making mass transit work serves the city's economy. Since 96% of Wall Street's workforce goes to the office by subway, bus, boat, bike or on foot, keeping the city moving and making it prosperous are of a piece. As Sadik-Khan has been known to tell top executives, 'Biking is the new golf'."

"Now in her fourth year in the post, Sadik-Khan is so in the groove and in mastery of her brief that pertinent points and argument-clinching stats trip off the tongue quicker than a yellow cab can change lanes. A rangy 50-year-old (though, like every well-groomed Manhattan professional, ageless), Sadik-Khan was formerly a senior VP of a large civil engineering firm and on the board of an environmental transport non-profit. ... 'The goal has been moving as many people as possible as quickly as possible – and safely', she says. 'Re-engineering streets is about re-imagining streetscapes, but it's also about making streets safer'."

"Segregated bike lanes ... such as the ones down Broadway or up Eighth Avenue, where a broad green strip at the side of the highway is separated from motorised traffic by kerbed islands and car parking – are a big safety success, calming traffic and facilitating safer crossing for pedestrians. 'What we've found is that we've not only achieved a 50% reduction in cyclist injuries where we have these lanes, but a 40% cut in all injuries because of the pedestrian refuge islands', she says. ... According to Sadik-



Pedestrianisation of part of Times Square delighted most – but not the cabbies.
Photo: Alan Schein/Corbis

Khan, bike use was up 13% in 2009-10, and has doubled in the five years since 2006. 'More cyclists are voting with their pedals', she says. ...

"Getting the message across is very much part of Sadik-Khan's expertise. A political science major, with a law degree to boot, Sadik-Khan also founded a communications consultancy. So, while she talks technocratic, she knows the power of symbols. Some of her boldest and most controversial strokes have been the pedestrianisation of iconic Manhattan spaces such as Times Square and Herald Square. As one commentator put it, that 'sends a signal of pedestrian pride'. Shrewdly, though, Sadik-Khan sticks to making the business case, leaving the ideological rhetoric for outsider campaigners. 'Our streets are our most valuable real estate', she says. 'In Times Square and Herald Square, retail rents have gone up 71% this year, so we're seeing that the value of this new public space is being recognised'. She cites a TfL [Transport for London] study showing that pedestrians spend more than any other 'modal' group. Many of these 're-imagining' measures resulted from her bold move, in 2007, to hire the Danish guru of pedestrianisation and urban planning, Jan Gehl.

"Such transformation has been far from freewheeling: as with the congestion charging zone in London, infringing upon drivers' 'freedoms' involves winning a political fight. 'We're talking about change – and the very idea of change makes people uneasy', she says. But her argument is that change is coming anyway, as New York continues to grow economically and pull people in. 'The city is growing more and more dense, and that density makes the city creative and innovative. But building more roads is not the answer to that development. We need to focus on other investments and strategies'. One of those investments will be a bike share programme, like the cycle hire schemes up and running in Paris and London. It will start in August this year, and the aim is to have a pool of 10,000 bikes by 2012."

Ref: Matt Seaton, The Guardian, 6/1/11

Confessions of an Engineer

"A book of standards to an engineer is better than a bible to a priest. All you have to do is to rely on the standards. ... When people would tell me that they did not want a wider street, I would tell them that they had to have it for safety reasons. When they answered that a wider street would make people drive faster and that would be seem to be less safe, especially in front of their house where their kids were playing, I would confidently tell them that the wider road was more safe, especially when combined with the other safety enhancements the standards called for.

"When people objected to those other 'enhancements', like removing all of the trees near the road, I told them that for safety reasons we needed to improve the sight distances and ensure that the recovery zone was free of obstacles. When they pointed out that the 'recovery zone' was also their 'yard' and that their kids played kickball and hopscotch there, I recommended that they put up a fence, so long as the fence was outside of the right-of-way.

"When they objected to the cost of the wider, faster, treeless road that would turn their peaceful, front yard into the viewing area for a drag strip unless they built a concrete barricade along their front property line, I informed them that progress was sometimes expensive, but these standards have been shown to work across the state, the country and the world and I could not compromise with their safety.

"In retrospect I understand that this was utter insanity. Wider, faster, treeless roads not only ruin our public places, they kill people. Taking highway standards and applying them to urban and suburban streets, and even county roads, costs us thousands of lives every year. There is no earthly reason why an engineer would ever design a fourteen foot lane for a city block, yet we do it continuously. Why? The answer is utterly shameful: Because that is the standard.

"In the engineering profession's version of defensive medicine, we can't recommend standards that are not in the manual. We can't use logic to vary from a standard that gives us 60 mph design speeds on roads with intersections every 200 feet. We can't question why two cars would need to travel at high speed in opposite directions on a city block, let alone why we would want them to. We can yield to public pressure and post a speed limit – itself a hazard – but we can't recommend a road section that is not in the highway manual.

"When the public and politicians tell engineers that their top priorities are safety and then cost, the engineer's brain hears something completely different. The engineer hears, 'Once you set a design

speed and handle the projected volume of traffic, safety is the top priority. Do what it takes to make the road safe, but do it as cheaply as you can'. This is why engineers return projects with asinine 'safety' features, like pedestrian bridges and tunnels that nobody will ever use, and costs that are astronomical. An engineer designing a street or road prioritises the world in this way, no matter how they are instructed:

- Traffic speed
- Traffic volume
- Safety
- Cost

"The rest of the world generally would prioritise things differently, as follows:

- Safety
- Cost
- Traffic volume
- Traffic speed

Oz Kayak, who started as an engineering cadet with the Victorian Roads Authority says that Charles's description is exactly his experience in Australia.

Today Oz is passionate about active forms of transport, community health and urban design. {See the series: *Interview with Oz Kayak* between issues #131 and #159}.

"In other words, the engineer first assumes that all traffic must travel at speed. Given that speed, all roads and streets are then designed to handle a projected volume. Once those parameters are set, only then does an engineer look at mitigating for safety and, finally, how to reduce the overall cost (which at that point is nearly always ridiculously expensive). In America, it is this thinking that has designed most of our built environment, and it is nonsensical. In many ways, it is professional malpractice. If we delivered what society asked us for, we would build our local roads and streets to be safe above all else. Only then would we consider what could be done, given our budget, to handle a higher volume of cars at greater speeds.

"We go to enormous expense to save ourselves small increments of driving time. This would be delusional in and of itself if it were not also making our roads and streets much less safe. I'll again reference a [2005 article from the APA Journal](#) showing how narrower, slower streets dramatically reduce accidents, especially fatalities."

Ref: Charles Marohn, Strong Towns Blog, 22/11/10

www.strongtowns.org/journal/2010/11/22/confessions-of-a-recovering-engineer.html

See the animation: *Conversation with an Engineer*

at: <http://www.strongtowns.org/journal/2010/12/6/conversation-with-an-engineer.html>

Problems in the Air: PM10

"The UK government has just weeks to convince EU officials that it will meet European clean air standards in London, if it is to avoid a court case.

The European Commission is assessing UK data for London and will decide in a month's time whether to give the UK an extension until mid-June to comply. Last June the Commission gave the UK a 'final warning' over air pollution in Greater London and Gibraltar. Tiny airborne particles, called PM10, are above EU limits in those two areas. ... Two countries – Slovenia and Sweden – have been referred to the European Court of Justice over their PM10 levels. Big fines can be levied if countries are found to have breached EU law. The Commission says PM10, emitted mainly by industry, traffic and domestic heating, can cause asthma, cardiovascular problems, lung cancer and premature death. ... Last year a scientific study commissioned by London Mayor Boris Johnson estimated that air pollution was responsible for 4,267 early deaths in the UK capital, through long-term exposure. It found that central London had the worst air pollution in the capital, but outer London had the most early deaths linked to the pollution, due to its higher population."

Ref: BBC News, 27/1/11

"If you've done much running, cycling – even walking – around the capital, it is a problem with which you will be all too familiar: dust. It infuses the air like incense, leaving it hot, heavy, and uncomfortable to breathe. It comes from car emissions, tyre and brake wear, and it is one reason why London is nearing the European Union's legal limits on particulate matter (PM10). ...

"Professor Frank Kelly is Director of Kings College London's Environmental Research Group [says] 'The source of London's pollution is traffic. ... If a long-term solution is to be found, that's what we need to look at'. It is to this end that a further scheme to remove the city's oldest, most-polluting, taxis by 2012 has come into force. Similarly, London's first zero-emissions bus route should begin service later in the year, with the help of eight hydrogen-fuelled buses. For many, this is doesn't go nearly far enough; more radical action may be needed."

Ref: Alice-Azania Jarvis, The Independent, 28/1/11

"The old solution of trolley buses updated and all delivery vehicles to be electric would help no end. ... Public transport should set an example and go electric as it is so much easier a technical issue than making cars electric."

Ref: David Cage, The Independent, 28/1/11

"Europe is considering tightening air quality standards following the latest analysis of the impact of air pollution on people's health, it emerged yesterday. Janez Potočnik, the European environment commissioner, signalled that the bar to combat poor air quality could be raised further as he prepares his decision on whether to grant the UK government an extension on meeting an existing directive on dangerous airborne particles, known as PM10s. He said the 'serious question' now being considered was whether these agreed standards should be strengthened because of new analysis provided by the World Health Organisation. The minute particles are emitted by traffic and from factories and could cause heart attacks, strokes, asthma and lung diseases."

Ref: Hélène Mulholland, The Guardian, 28/1/11



London's Heavy Traffic Creates High Levels of Dust Pollution

Photo: Rex Features,
The Independent, 28/1/11

"London should simply follow the example of Madrid and move all the monitoring stations to the middle of parks. In this way, the problems of air pollution can be solved in just one day. Spain leads the way on this issue."

Ref: Reader's Comment, The Guardian, 28/1/11

"Air pollution, particularly from ozone and nitrogen dioxide, is increasingly implicated [in asthma attacks] and many studies from Europe and North America indicate that it is at least exacerbating the epidemic. Research work has shown that air pollution damages the lungs, helping to bring on the chemical cascade that triggers attacks. Emissions of nitrogen dioxide from car exhausts have increased by 73% in Britain since 1981, and official figures show that 19 million Britons are regularly exposed to pollution that exceeds European Union guidelines."

Ref: Geoffrey Lean, The Independent, 24/7/94

More on 4WDs (SUVs) in Cities

Last month *The Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* ran an article on a plan to remove 4WDs from Paris streets {see #187} and also posed the question: should large 4WDs be banned from some Australian cities? The online poll was roughly 2/3 in favour and 1/3 against.

There was also plethora of comments typically polarised into the 'I have a right to drive what I want where I want' camp and '4WDs in cities are typically unnecessary and unsafe'. Here for your amusement is a selection:

"To the latte-sipping tools who want to ban 4WD vehicles from city streets, go live in North Korea. That is where your mindset belongs. You may want to live in a totalitarian nanny state that dictates to you every aspect of your life, but I most certainly do not. I believe in personal liberty and individuals making choices for themselves, but also bearing the consequences of those choices. How dare you try to tell me what sort of vehicle I can and cannot drive?"

"We are not 'living our own lives' while you drive your giant 4WD on the road next to me. Driving one on your farm is keeping it to yourself. When you drive it on communal property – the road and environment

we share – you are not. You cannot argue that you are simply doing your own thing. You are getting the rest of us to pay for your excesses. Get out of our pockets and lives you selfish stereotype.”

“What’s wrong with local communities making decisions to manage their scarce local resources (like road capacity)? Lots of cities have some version of this type of regulation.”

“Here we go with all the usual city excuses: ‘I go camping once every 3 years so I drive my 4WD every day in the city’; ‘I drive to a city beach so I need a 4WD’; ‘I need a 4WD because I have a family’; And some of the more egregious excuses I have heard: ‘I pay thousands of dollars more for fuel for my 4WD therefore I deserve to have one’; ‘My family was in a car accident so I am getting a 4WD so they aren’t the ones hurt next time’. ... There are plenty of places you can hire a 4WD to go camping or go to the beach. If you like wasting thousands of dollars on fuel you can afford to pay a 4WD tax.”

“It’s not the width or length of the vehicle that’s the biggest issue for those of us in smaller or lower cars. It’s the fact that when behind or beside these vehicles you can’t see what’s in front or oncoming. Also the fact that in a side-impact collision the bonnet of these vehicles are at or above head-height for smaller vehicles. And please don’t give me a chorus of ‘you just have to stay further back’. I’ve done some testing of this theory ... and it doesn’t matter how much space is between me (Subaru Impreza) and the Pajero (or whatever) in front, I can’t see what’s in front of the Pajero. Besides which, even if leaving more space were the solution, how often do you get the chance to leave a couple of hundred metres between you and the next car on suburban streets?”

“I think there should be a ‘wanker tax’ based on the vehicle being registered. For example,

- *Toyota Prius – you’re a low level try hard wanker, \$20 /week tax*
- *V8 Commodore – you’re a loud wanker, \$50 / week tax, plus ongoing annoyance from the cops*
- *All Audi drivers – you are in wankers’ denial. \$100 week tax*
- *BMW X5 – you’ve taken wanking to unprecedented levels, you drive, look and sound like a wanker too. \$20,000 week tax.”*

“I live in the Melbourne CBD. Doesn’t get much more central CBD than where I live. I own a heavily modified 4x4. Living and working in the city, I appreciate the ability it gives me to escape. It is a hobby. Are you ban-band-wagon people suggesting that I can no longer have it? Ha-ha. Here is a suggestion. As a resident, allow me to drive my 4x4 around the city all day long, whenever I feel like it, but you people driving into my suburb Melbourne 3000, every morning and every night, clogging my local streets can stay in your own suburb with your car, stay out of mine. Problem solved. No more city congestion and happy locals.”

“I love my 4WD. Keeps me elevated, see? Keeps me away from the riff raff, see? I earn my money, pay my taxes. I can do anything I want, see? Stuff everyone! My obvious character flaws are not to be made fun of, see?”

“Turn the argument back on to the real issue –congestion and its causes ie lack of government investment in public transport. How can any capital city experience great population growth especially on the fringes (as well as inner-city redevelopment) yet not cater one iota towards increasing the capacity of public transport or providing any public transport to many of these areas? If as much emphasis was placed on growing the transport system as there was on providing road infrastructure we would have the one of the best public transport systems in the world.”

Ref: Readers’ Comments, The Age/SMH 20/1/11

And Also ... Cash-for-Clunkers *“would have paid \$2000 to each motorist [in Australia] who traded in a pre-1995 car for a more fuel-efficient one. By scrapping it, the government will save A\$429 million. The program was criticised for the high price it would have paid to cut carbon emissions – about A\$400 a tonne.”*

Ref: Editorial, The Sunday Age, 30/1/11