

## Election 2007

During this year I've met with politicians from all the key parties on the subject of sustainable design of cities and transport. In January, one Federal Shadow Minister said that while he supported the proposal he predicted that it would not gain any currency in the Federal election simply because it was not being talked about enough. Several Shadow Ministers tried to organise a meeting for me with the Shadow Minister for the Environment but somehow the invitation never arrived. Given that around 25% of greenhouse gases are generated in the transport sector it would be expected that potential solutions could be given a hearing. I met Peter Garrett briefly in Alice Springs last month and he promised a meeting after the election. I hope that was a core promise!

One area of concern is that many of our political champions are in marginal seats. We certainly wish them all the best for the 2007 election

There was unanimous support for the House of Representatives Standing Committee Report on Sustainable Cities and several Liberal Party politicians tried hard to get the subject on their national agenda [see #27 & #28]. Perhaps this kind of visionary thinking could have captured the imagination of the electorate in a way that tax cuts have not. So often we hear the call to invest in sustainable infrastructure and what better way than to change the course of our dysfunctional cities. Yet while billions of Federal funding is promised for roads, sustainable cities and public transport has not raised a ripple. There are precedents for Federal funding so the line that it is a 'State issue' is despicable (read shameful and disgraceful).

What is clear is that those of us advocating for sustainable transport are nowhere near as organised as we need to be. No matter how correct the cause, the momentum required to get over the inertia of the status quo is enormous. In the last 32 years I have seen the renewable energy industry move from derision to approval in that process that Arthur Schopenhauer so succinctly stated: *'All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident'*. The concept of sustainable cities is in the second stage and is being opposed by neglect.

## Electric Vehicles (EV)

Three EVs will be on display at the Castlemaine Sustainability Exhibition on November 9 & 10.

## Pork Barrelling in Victoria

*"One of Melbourne's busiest freeways — the Western Ring Road — would be widened under a \$1.2 billion Labor commitment to reduce traffic gridlock...But environment and social welfare groups say a larger freeway will encourage more car use and the money would be better spent on improving public transport."*

Ref: Jewel Toppsfield *The Age* 25/10/07

*"We're crunching up against peak oil and climate change, and Rudd offers more lanes on the Ring Road! What planet is he on?"*

Ref: John Merory *The Age* 27/10/07

*"The Labor Party likes to talk about real action on climate change. It's very good at it. If you want a government that talks about action, vote Labor. Then watch Rudd widen the West Gate Freeway, ironing out the peak hour problems of carbon emissions. For real action, we need to look further."*

Ref: Emily Koch *The Age* 27/10/07

## Sustainable Cities and Transport

The ACF website has an election scorecard. On the question: *'Set out a sustainability agenda and build sustainable cities. Establish a Sustainability Charter and National Sustainability Commission; support major programs to equitably green our homes, suburbs and transport'*. This is how they rated the parties:

	Democrats
	Family First
	Greens
	Labor
	Liberal/National Party

Ref: [www.acfonline.org.au](http://www.acfonline.org.au)

The Big Switch website has a questionnaire on climate change. See how your candidate rates on Question 8: *"Transport is a major source of greenhouse pollution — and this is exacerbated by the inefficiencies and tax incentives within Australia's transport system. Incentives for greater car use must be removed, while investment in other modes of transport must be increased."*

Congratulations to Gary Hardgrave (Liberal, Moreton, Qld) for scoring full marks on this question. By comparison Julia Gillard (Labor, Lalor, Vic) supports 'more efficient cars' but not federal funding of public transport which is strange considering the dire need in her electorate.

Ref: [www.thebigswitch.org.au](http://www.thebigswitch.org.au)

## Peak Oil

*"Peak oil will crucify an economy such as Australia's, built on mining, tourism, broad acre agriculture and long distance road transport and shipping. The answer is in rapid electrification of transport, and Australia needs Kevin Rudd's 'green car' – not just a hybrid but fully electric vehicles and plug-in hybrids now."*

**Ref: Peter Parry *The Age* 24/10/07**

*"The Age...(26/10) carried a relatively small item on page three on a UN report of 500 or more pages written by some of the world's leading environmental scientists....In the same issue, there are at least six advertisements for private transport far beyond our needs, several invitations to travel for less than useful purposes and features galore on what can only be wasteful utilization of resources."*

**Ref: T F Sandeman *The Age* 27/10/07**



*"I recently began riding a motor-scooter to the city for work because it saves time, money and is more convenient... The council should be encouraging alternatives forms of transport to the city like motor scooters and motor cycles."*

**Ref: Matthew Read *The Age* 27/10/07**

## And Also...

*"On Monday, the Prime Minister will be in Bastable on the NSW coast, which he must retain to win government ... to attend the opening of The Gullet Bi-Lo's new car park, as a way of addressing charges that the government is not dealing with urban renewal."*

**Ref: Guy Rundle *The Age* 28/10/07**

## Wahgunyah

On October 20 I was invited to give a talk on sustainable design and ultra-light rail vehicles at Wahgunyah, on the Murray near Rutherglen, Vic. Attending were Councillors from Indigo Shire, Moira Shire, Deniliquin City and Wagga Wagga City. It was good to see such passion within the local community both in organising the seminar and in seeking viable alternatives to motor vehicle based transport in areas of lower density.

Interestingly, it was near impossible to catch public transport to Wahgunyah to suit the seminar times unless I wanted to endure the 12 hour 20 minute trip suggested by the VicLink Journey Planner: catch the 7.55pm train from Southern Cross Station, change at Albury at 11.15pm, wait around until the 7.25am coach which would arrive at 8.15am. There would have been another long wait until the 5pm seminar. It appears that the public transport that is available is designed to get the locals to Melbourne and back rather than the other way around. This is an obvious barrier to sustainable tourism in a time of rising petrol prices

At the dinner following the seminar, the guest speaker was former Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer, a passionate supporter of both tourism and rail-based freight. Congratulations to Dave Moyle and the team at Wahgunyah for all their good work in promoting sustainable transport.



**Wahgunyah – once a bustling railway station on a river port. We will regret that we failed to maintain our rural railway lines. There is at least the potential for a tourist train using the Parry People Mover ultra-light rail technology.**

**Online:** [www.goingsolar.com.au/transport](http://www.goingsolar.com.au/transport)

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