

## Fuel Excise

*"Malcolm Turnbull ... has not denied sending [an] email warning his leader that cutting petrol tax was bad policy. ... Mr Turnbull is believed to have told the Coalition leadership group last Wednesday that he did not agree with their decision to call for a five cents a litre cut in fuel excise, but would support it publicly."*

**Ref: The Age, 19/5/08**

**'Looks as if Malcolm's been sending more e-mails'**



*"...The chief executive of the Climate Institute, John Connor, said he was 'disappointed' by the Opposition Leader's pledge to cut the excise by five cents a litre. He said the move would do nothing to reduce carbon emissions or to encourage the development of alternative energy sources. 'This is just unfortunate low-road politics that didn't get Hillary Clinton very far', Mr Connor said. 'This is disappointing for a Coalition that was starting to show some maturity on climate-change issues'.*

*"The national motoring lobby group, the Australian Automobile Association, was also cool on the measure outlined by Mr Nelson, despite the likelihood that it could provide some relief at the bowser. The AAA's policy and research director, John Metcalfe, said his association had not advocated a cut in the fuel excise, but favoured more significant and far-reaching reform. He said the current fuel excise should be replaced by a road-user charge."*

**Ref: Katharine Murphy, The Age, 16/5/08**

*"The RAC's David Moir agrees the reduction would have little impact in the long term. Instead, he has called for widespread reform of the motoring taxation system. 'We've got to have a system that will help us cope with the changes that are coming up with climate change, with the increasing congestion in our capital cities, and I think we're looking for something more far-reaching than simply a little slice off the top,' he said."*

**Ref: ABC News, 16/5/08**

## And Also ...

*"A Yarra Trams spokesman said drivers should be careful doing hook turns."*

**Ref: MX 13/2/08**

## Cars causing Congestion

*"An RACQ study has found that Brisbane drivers use 30 per cent more fuel getting to work in peak hour, compared to the same journey in the middle of the day. The motoring body carried out a comparison test on two commuter routes into Brisbane to understand the effects of congestion on fuel consumption and emissions. The increase in fuel consumption is about a \$7.50 increase per week. The RACQ's Steve Spalding says ... the finding also reinforces the need for governments to get serious about reducing congestion on the roads."*

**Ref: ABC News, 20/5/08**

The Victorian government admitted its modelling for East Link has "shown the new tollway would increase traffic congestion by about 10 per cent at the Hoddle Street end of the Eastern Freeway. 'The increase in traffic volumes ... at the Hoddle Street end, is no more than about 10 per cent,' Roads and Ports Minister Tim Pallas said .... EastLink should ease traffic ... [Premier] Brumby used this as evidence to spruik the tollway as offering 'substantial' environmental benefits. ... 'because people will be spending less time travelling to and from work ... and, of course, all of the surrounding roads are going to be carrying less traffic.' But the Public Transport Users Association said the opposite was true, and new roads invariably encouraged more drivers. 'It would be lovely to think that billions of US dollars of new motorway would result in less traffic pollution, but history shows us the opposite is true, that traffic levels rise every time new road capacity is provided. We'll end up with more people driving, more often, causing more pollution'."

**Ref: The Age, 11/5/08**

*"Before Mr Brumby agrees to any new road projects with the aim of reducing congestion, he should ask how a new road tunnel will achieve this when previous road projects have failed to deliver on this promise, and have instead exacerbated the problem. Did the CityLink tunnels and the Monash Freeway extension help ease congestion in the long term? Building new roads just shifts cars and associated congestion from one part of the road network to another. The only projects that will help ease congestion in Melbourne and get cars off the road are projects that increase the availability, frequency and coverage of public transport, giving commuters a real and convenient alternative to driving. Couple this with policies designed to discourage car use, such as congestion and parking taxes, and the State Government will find that building an \$8 billion road tunnel will be unnecessary."*

**Ref: James Christou, The Age, 4/4/08**

## Problems with Petrol

*"The Indonesian Government, which subsidises petrol prices, was the target of protests when it announced a petrol price increase for private cars only, not motorcycles or public transportation. The price will rise from an average of 51 cents per litre to 68 cents per litre. Indonesia's Energy and Mineral Resources Minister recently announced that all petrol consumption by all motorists will be limited from September, with exact figures to be released later this year."*

**Ref: Lucy Battersby, The Age, 22/5/08**

*"The price of petrol in Australia before tax is one of the lowest in the OECD, despite the fact that the Australian market is smaller than the Californian market. There are even times when the petrol price per barrel is cheaper than the crude oil it is refined from. ... We need fuel to be more expensive so people will start buying more fuel-efficient cars." Ref: Leonard McDonnell (a freelance journalist whose clients include major oil companies). The Age, 26/5/08*

*"Australia has consumed about 19 billion litres of petroleum on average for the past five years ..."*

**Ref: Leo Shanahan, The Age, 26/5/08**

*"If we don't like paying higher prices for petrol or the rapidly increasing congestion on the roads, we have some personal choices that will reduce their impact. These include: use public transport; form a car pool; ride a bike; shop locally and less frequently; buy more fuel-efficient cars; send the kids to school on bikes or public transport; set yourself decreasing monthly targets for distance travelled and reward yourself when you achieve those targets; and finally, keep nagging your local councillors and politicians with demands for better and safer public transport services to support your changed transport usage"*

**Ref: Paul Fullerton, The Age, 26/5/08**

*"This is a perfect opportunity for both state and federal governments to get public transport in our major cities out of the prehistoric age. It is absolutely amazing in this resource-rich country of ours that our public transport system is so dirty, old, degrading, overcrowded, expensive, and unreliable. It is a disgrace! ... Get people onto public transport and off the roads."*

**Ref: Michael Mangan, The Age, 26/5/08**

Should GST on petrol be abolished?  
Yes 65% No 35% [of 774 votes] An interesting result given car ownership levels. **Ref:** <http://www.theage.com.au/polls/results.html>



Picture: Persian Gulf Ref : AP

## Our First Drive-in University

*"Monash University, Australia's first drive-in uni, turns 50 this year. In 1958 ... [the] first big decision was where to locate the campus. ... A survey showed that 43% of applicants planned to travel by public transport. But the university's master plan already included 2000 student parking places, a target soon lifted to 4000. ... Students soon sized up the public transport connections as inadequate. In 1963, about 24% of Monash students arrived on campus by public transport, a proportion no better than today. Monash Clayton was originally planned for 8000 students. Today it has 26,000 and almost 5000 staff. Students taking the train from the city often find that the connecting buses depart just as the train pulls in. At the beginning of each year, bus patronage rises but soon falls off as disenchanted students get a car. Despite a \$290 annual charge, it's often hard to find a spot in Monash's 9000-space car parks. Multiply the cost of those parking places, add the capital and running costs of the cars themselves, estimate the opportunity cost of the space covered with bitumen instead of lecture theatres and labs, and you have some idea of the price Monash pays for the lack of good public transport. Melbourne is now facing up to the consequences of its love affair with the car. First to feel the impact of peak oil and carbon trading will be low-income earners, including students. You would think that such a large concentration of potential patrons would figure somewhere in transport planning. Is it time to build that promised rail link along Wellington and North roads from Huntingdale to Rowville?"*

**Ref: Graeme Davison, The Age, 26/5/08**

## Commuting

*"I work on a magazine that's for car enthusiasts. I think it's pretty accurate to say that nobody really looks forward to driving a horrible long commute on fairly congested roads. And we get letters from our readers - and Perth is one of the places that seems to have its act together a bit more than elsewhere in Australia - and our readers are saying, "I'm glad to avoid the commute by car. I'm happy to get into public transport if it's competitive on time and cost."*

**Ref (and below): John Carey, Associate Editor of Wheels magazine on ABC TV Difference of Opinion: Are We Running On Empty? 26/7/07**

**See:** ... <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/differenceofopinion/content/2007/s1988852.htm>

**And Also ...** "PJ O'Rourke ... was sent to Iraq and he looked down from a helicopter and reportedly thought to himself, "Wouldn't it be just cheaper to buy the oil?" **Ref: John Carey**

## Is there a Link?

This Newsletter has been seeking clarification on the apparently high cost of road and rail infrastructure projects. Perhaps recent news reports suggest a cause: "Leighton Holdings and Macquarie Group have won the \$4.8 billion contract for Australia's largest road infrastructure project, which includes the Brisbane airport link. ... Of the cost of the airport link, taxpayers would contribute \$47 million because of the funding agreement ... For the total project, which includes land costs, the state would contribute \$1.5 billion instead of the \$2.37 billion for which it had budgeted originally."

**Ref: AAP, The Age, 19/5/08**

At \$26.8 million, Macquarie CEO Nicholas Moore "earned almost 80 times the \$336,000 salary earned by the Prime Minister and is 453 times the average NSW worker's salary of \$59,000. It also equates to Mr Moore earning \$3053 an hour, awake or asleep, all year."

**Ref: Stuart Washington, The Age, 20/5/08**

"Macquarie Group chief executive Allan Moss leaves the 'millionaires' factory' with a fortune worth more than \$80 million, setting new standards in a debate about how much executive pay is too much."

**Ref: Stuart Washington, The Age, 21/5/08**

**May 2008: New tram tracks being lowered into position on St Kilda Road.** Ref: Yarra Trams, Picture: John Krutop



## Problems with PPP

"The bubble of irrational exuberance in infrastructure and PPPs (public private partnerships) has been pricked. Big writedowns on Sydney's Lane Cove Tunnel toll-road project exposed by BusinessDay yesterday are as much about flawed traffic forecasts as falling asset values, but the pool of funds available for PPPs, both debt and equity, has shrunk. ...

"An aside: yesterday's revelations that the NSW Government would proceed with its long-awaited metro rail line through the north-west of Sydney will trigger potentially hundreds of millions in penalty fees to infrastructure company Transurban, operator of Sydney's M2 Motorway and Melbourne's CityLink. The contracts are still secret, despite Freedom of Information requests, but are believed to contain indemnity clauses for any losses suffered by the private operator by new and competing transport facilities. Once again, the NSW Government shoots itself in the foot." **Ref: Michael West, The Age, 21/5/08**

## Feedback

*A good critique of the Federal Budget in yesterday's newsletter [#60]. The \$20 billion infrastructure fund could be the best thing for sustainable transport - or not, depending on how Infrastructure Australia approaches the task of determining priorities. To this end, we were delighted to see Professor Peter Newman appointed to the IA Board.*

**Ref: Stewart Prins, 21/5/08**

## Good Signs for Public Transport

"The appointment of leading sustainability advocate Professor Peter Newman to the Infrastructure Australia Board shows the Federal Government is serious about investing in urban public transport, according to peak industry group Tourism & Transport Forum (TTF). National Transport Manager [of the TTF] Stewart Prins today said Professor Newman would ensure sustainability issues were front and centre in the national infrastructure audit to be conducted by Infrastructure Australia.

"Making our cities environmentally sustainable is a huge task. We will not be able to meet the Rudd Government's greenhouse gas targets unless we make major changes to our cities - and that will require massive investments in new infrastructure. Professor Newman has been a long-standing

champion of the need to invest in better public transport, so it is very reassuring to see someone with his credentials appointed to the Infrastructure Australia Board'. ... Infrastructure Australia Board would play a critical role in guiding infrastructure policy across all levels of government.

"With the Federal Government allocating \$20 billion to its new Building Australia Fund, Infrastructure Australia will be central to decisions about how best to spend this money. 'The Board will need to consider the economic, social and environmental impacts of new infrastructure, including our commitments under the Kyoto Protocol. Already the Federal Government has signalled its interest in public transport projects such as the new metro rail system in Sydney and the proposed cross-town rail tunnel in Melbourne - with funding for studies into both of these projects in last week's Budget. Other major projects that should be considered include the electrification of Adelaide's train network, grade separations along Victoria's Dandenong rail corridor, and a possible high-speed east coast rail link connecting Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney and Brisbane'."

**Ref: TTF Media Release, 19/5/08**

## Docklands (Melbourne)

*"In its first major blueprint for Docklands, the [Melbourne City] council has laid out changes it believes are needed over the next three years if the district is to thrive. Key recommendations from its new Delivering for Docklands strategy include:*

- *Connecting Docklands to Footscray by tram, by extending the 86 tram route through Melbourne's ports.*
- *Increasing speed, frequency and viability of all transport to Docklands, with more trams, buses, water taxis and ferries.*

*... About 4000 people now live in Docklands, and 7000 work there. Population projections indicate that by 2010 there will be more than 8000 residents and more than 20,000 workers. ... The council's strategy aims to improve all transport links to the area. The ferry and water taxi system would be reviewed, said Cr Peter Clarke, the chairman of the Docklands Co-ordination Committee. Sydney Harbour has a speed limit of 15 knots, (28 km/h); in comparison, a speed limit of just 5 knots (9 km/h) applies at Docklands. This was too slow, Cr Clarke said. 'It is quicker to walk from Flinders Street Station than it is to go by water taxi,' he said. 'We need to dramatically increase that.' The council will also look into extending the 86 tram route to Footscray. It now runs from Bundoora to Docklands. Under the new plan, the tram line would continue down Footscray Road, and end at Footscray railway station. 'It's one on our wish list,' Yarra Trams chief executive Dennis Cliche said. 'It's a question of funding, and that ultimately comes back to the State Government.' The council strategy also recommends better pedestrian and bicycle networks, and planting more trees across Docklands." Ref: Clay Lucas, The Age, 2/1/08*

## Myki

*"Shadow transport minister Terry Mulder has discovered through Fol that the [Myki] discovery centre [at Southern Cross Station] costs \$8333.33 to rent a month or \$100,000 a year. So, for each month and year that myki is not on time and not on budget, there goes more dough. ... Let's not forget the \$545,000 paid to Vivian Miners, the Transport Ticketing Authority chief who skedaddled hours before he was due to be quizzed by a parliamentary committee."*



Ref: Suzanne Carbone, The Age, 12/5/08

Picture Ref: Wikipedia

## Car Share in Melbourne

*"Nine car sharing spaces have been created in recent months at Docklands bringing to total 29 car share spaces within the City of Melbourne - the highest number in Victoria. The program allows members to rent cars by the hour or by the day with rental costs including petrol, insurance, cleaning, maintenance and registration. The City of Melbourne provides spaces to ensure there are regular parking bays reserved specifically for participating vehicles and allows cars to be easily located for each*

*new user. A recent survey conducted by the City of Melbourne, in partnership with Flexicar, showed 25 per cent of Flexicar car*



*share members surveyed had sold their private vehicle. Respondents also indicated an average of 15km per week, or 25 per cent decline, in their car usage since joining." Ref: The Green Leaflet, (City of Melbourne) 19/5/08*

## Who Can Benefit From Carshare?

Carshare/Flex-car programs help remove the total number of cars on roads but conveniently provide a vehicle when needed:

- Where lots of staff members catch public transport to work but still need transport during the day.
- Where there is heavy reliance on taxis.
- When there's not a pool car – or the one there is, is being heavily used.
- Where there's competition for staff and customer parking on site.
- When an organisation needs a cheaper or greener transport alternative.

Ref: Flexicar 24/1/08 [www.flexicar.com.au](http://www.flexicar.com.au)

## And Also ...



A cargo plane at Brussels Airport  
Picture: Reuters

*"The plane is very seriously damaged,"* said Jan Van der Cruysse, a spokesman at Brussels Airport. Ref: SMH 26/5/08