

'Tanks-a-Lot'

"Car giant Toyota had already decided to make a hybrid version of its Camry sedan in Australia and did not need the \$70 million of taxpayer-funded subsidies promised by the federal and Victorian governments yesterday. Kevin Rudd, speaking at a meeting with Toyota executives at their Nagoya plant in Japan, yesterday pledged \$35million to the company from Labor's new Green Car Innovation Fund as an incentive to assemble the vehicles at the Altona facility in Victoria. Victorian Premier John Brumby matched the \$35million figure. But the funding promise has been undermined by local Toyota chiefs, who told The Australian the decision to make petrol-electric hybrid Camrys in Australia had already been made and was due to be announced 'within months'."

Ref: Philip King and Matthew Franklin, The Australian, 11/6/08

"To put the numbers in perspective, Australia's car industry has produced between 300,000 and 400,000 cars a year this decade. Toyota manufactures about 140,000 cars a year in Australia and has sold 10,000 or so of its hybrid Prius cars since the first series two cars arrived at the end of 2001."

Ref: Matthew Warren, The Australian, 11/6/08

"While running the investment attraction program for successive Victorian governments (from 1989 to 2004) I regularly collated market intelligence on incentives provided by governments around the world to attract so-called 'footloose' investments. In these surveys the automotive industry invariably topped the list — and with grants that regularly exceeded 50% of the capital cost of the investments. Why? Market intelligence showed that any large investment or employment project captured the attention of politicians for obvious electoral reasons, and that the automotive industry offered more of these opportunities. Further, as the automotive industry continued to expand globally, the manufacturers were always considering several projects at any time. This provided fertile ground in which to play off governments. The car companies create opportunities for governments to provide incentives, share in the announcements, and claim credit for attracting particular investments. But I suspect ultimate corporate game plans are rarely changed."

Ref: Barry Ferguson, Business Age, 12/6/08

PHEV

"South Melbourne company Szencorp has not only skidded past the local motoring industry to win the race to develop an electric car, its marque can pump energy back into buildings."

Federal Minister for Finance Lindsay Tanner will today unveil Australia's first plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV), created at Sydney's University of Technology (UTS) for Szencorp, a developer of energy and water efficient properties.

The car has been retrofitted with extra batteries so that it can store more electricity than a conventional hybrid, allowing it to bypass its petrol tank for at least 30km. 'Unlike ordinary hybrids that derive all their



Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV) Photo Ref: Mik Kovac, ECS

electrical energy from petrol, the PHEV, a converted Toyota Prius can be charged up using renewable energy from a normal power point', Szencorp chairman Peter Szental said.

"Asked if the PHEV will have as much grunt as a petrol driven car, Mr Szental told BNW: 'You will be able to lose your licence just as easily in a PHEV'. Szencorp and UTS have partnered with Stan Baker, from Green Auto Conversions, in the venture and are ready to take orders from motorists who want to retrofit their Priuses. It is estimated that when the venture reaches production line scale, the cost of retrofitting will be between \$4000 and \$5000.

"Over time, savings will be made through reduced petrol and electricity costs as the vehicle will store energy that can be fed back into buildings. Capitalising on the car's unique "plug out" feature, Mr Szental plans to use it to supply power to his Albert Rd headquarters, which was Australia's first six-star energy efficient refurbished building.

An array of rooftop solar panels currently supply almost half of the building's electricity needs and will now also power the office car. 'Szencorp has funded the PHEV project to demonstrate that cutting-edge, low-emission technologies like these are viable and can literally plug in to our existing infrastructure', he said."

Ref: Olga Galacho, H/Sun, 12/6/08



Photo: Some of the Photovoltaics on the Szencorp roof (installed by Going Solar)

Continued ...

Leading from Behind

“Australia was a world leader in hybrid car technologies, but federal funding cuts and a decision to invest more research effort in clean-coal technologies forced CSIRO to dump development of the world's first family-sized hybrid-electric car.

Associate professor of the Australian National University's Crawford School of Economics Richard Denniss said yesterday, ‘Australia had a green car almost a decade ago. We could have been driving locally made hybrids by now and reaping the economic and environmental benefits’.

Mr Rudd said the \$35 million deal for Toyota to build four-cylinder hybrid Camrys at its factory in Melbourne's western suburbs was ‘good for motorists, good for fuel efficiency, good for the car industry in Australia, good for the environment’. ... But the hybrid Camrys are less fuel-efficient than the CSIRO and Holden designed Ecommodore, which used 50 per cent less fuel than a full-sized family car and reduced exhaust fumes by 90 per cent. Professor Denniss said the Rudd Government should ‘dust off’ the hybrid- Holden and encourage uptake of more fuel-efficient cars by abolishing fringe benefits tax arrangements that drove ‘demand for big, dumb petrol-guzzling company cars. If the Government is serious about green cars and cutting emissions, then it should introduce incentives for greener car fleets. If it supported the Holden hybrid by making it the Government's fleet car, then it could really talk of leading by example. It would create an instant market for it’.



‘Yeah, another funding cut.’

“CSIRO sources told The Canberra Times if there had been greater support for the Holden Ecommodore hybrid from both the the Howard government and Labor during its decade in Opposition Australia would be ‘well down the road by now’ to building and marketing a locally designed green car. They say CSIRO and Holden jointly spent about \$12 million in developing the low-emissions Ecommodore which was the world's first full-sized hybrid-electric powered family car but the Howard government invested only \$2 million in the project, claiming consumer demand for the car would be too limited to justify a more substantial investment. These CSIRO sources have also questioned whether the Rudd Government's \$35 million deal with Toyota will include future negotiations to use CSIRO's UltraBattery a hybrid car battery successfully tested in Britain and now being built by Japan's Furukawa battery company to power the locally built green Camrys.

“The Ecommodore, used as VIP transport during the Sydney Olympic Games, combined an electric motor powered by supercapacitors and advanced lead-acid batteries with a four-cylinder aluminium alloy petrol engine. It was described by Holden at its launch before the Games, in May 2000, as ‘a rolling showcase of all-Australian ingenuity’ which incorporated an array of locally developed new technologies. These included improved aerodynamics, lightweight construction, solar cooling and minimised energy loss during braking. Six months after the Sydney Olympics, CSIRO's low-emission vehicle team won the CSIRO chairman's gold medal the organisation's top award for nationally significant research for its role in designing the Ecommodore.

“It was the first hybrid car in the world to feature a cost-effective combination of supercapacitors and lead-acid batteries, enabling it to store large amounts of energy and deliver rapid power for acceleration. A federal funding squeeze in 2006 forced CSIRO to revise all research investments, and focus energy research on clean-coal technologies such as carbon capture and storage. Hybrid vehicle research and intelligent transport systems including an Australian designed computer-automated ultra-light rail system were among the casualties.”

Ref: Rosslyn Beeby, Canberra Times, 11/6/08

Continued ...

Ferry Proposal for Port Phillip

"A ferry linking Werribee South to the Docklands has been floated as a possible alternative transport solution to ease traffic congestion. Developers are working with Tasmanian boat builders to develop a high-speed catamaran that would transport commuters to the city within 30 minutes. The plan includes operating four ferries that can carry 150-200 passengers on each journey. Prudentia Investments, behind the \$440 million Wyndham Harbour development at Werribee South, said a ferry would give Point Cook and some Werribee residents another transport option. Point Cook's population alone is tipped to increase by more than 20,000 within 10 years.



Prudentia's managing director, Angus Reed, said the ferry could be up and running by the time Wyndham Harbour is finished, due early 2011. The development is six months behind schedule. 'In respect to transport there is a bottleneck on the Werribee to Melbourne train service. And it is not just as simple as putting on more trains', Mr Reed said. 'At a fundamental level, what we are talking with four ferries would increase the current peak-hour load out of the Werribee/Point Cook area by 30 per cent'.

"Mr Reed said preliminary plans were under way and he hoped to present them to the Government in 'the next couple of months. We have been in discussions with boat builders who can provide high-speed ferries that can travel up to 30 knots and would be able to operate in 95-100 per cent of weather conditions, but obviously that would require detailed analysis', he said. 'But because it is a relatively close-to-shore service, running no more than 500m offshore, we believe the consistency of service will be very good'.

"The chairman of the Dockland Co-ordination Committee, Cr Peter Clarke, was open to the idea. 'We'd certainly make docking available for them at Waterfront City where passengers would be able to walk from there and get a tram to the city', Cr Clarke said. Werribee South Ratepayers Association member Nik Tsardarkis said the ferry idea showed Werribee South could be an important part of Wyndham's economy. 'There is certainly strong merit in providing alternative public transport', Mr Tsardarkis said."

Ref: James Twining, Wyndham Leader 10/6/08

Herald Sun Readers' Comments:

"Since visiting Brisbane a few years ago I've been wondering why nothing similar has been done in Melbourne. We could have ferries linking Flinders St Station, up the Yarra, Docklands, and all places around the bay. It should be linked with Metcard and, like in Brisbane, have a mix of express & 'stopping all ports' ferries. They should also include bicycle carrying facilities for those who need to travel further at both ends of their journey. It would also serve as a new 'punt' across the Yarra below the west gate bridge for cyclists."

Ref: Scott of Flemington 11/6/08

"This is a great idea, as ... more and more people [are getting in] traffic jams everyday and this should be a cheaper option than underground or railway."

Ref: George 10/6/08

"Can we have a tram system in Werribee? So I can take [the] tram to Werribee South and then to the City? Could possibly the ferry services be part of the Met ticket system - which means I can just buy a monthly ticket to take the ferry and the tram?"

Ref: Amy Lee of Point Cook 10/6/08

"Great idea. Then they should extend the service to St Kilda, Williamstown, Sandringham, Frankston and even Geelong and create a first class ferry terminal at central pier at Docklands. Funny how ferries were not even mentioned as part of Eddington's strategy, yet they could be as revolutionary as they have been in Brisbane where their service is being extended further into their western suburbs."

Ref: Sean of St Kilda 10/6/08

Continued ...

"Simon is spot on - do the maths people - it would take about 30min to go from the river entrance to Docklands at the maximum speed limit allowed in the Yarra - so let's say it will be 1 hr at least from Werribee."

Ref: David of Melbourne 10/6/08

"Maybe they should think about running a ferry from Seaford or Frankston to the City."

Ref: Alison Barnes 10/6/08

"Ferries also run on 'diesel' hardly a carbon neutral statement and they cost more than a million each. Stupid. Stupid. Stupid."

Ref: Touched by the Toll Road. 10/6/08

"There's already a ferry service running from St Kilda to the city and from Williamstown to the city. Granted it's a lot more expensive than catching the train / tram but if you really despise catching those modes of transport or driving your car it's certainly a lot more pleasant. I think this plan is long overdue. However, I also believe that our other modes of PT desperately need to be upgraded."

Ref: Melissa of Elwood 10/6/08

"Have lived by the bay my whole life. It gets too rough, simple as that."

Ref: Anthony 10/6/08

"Ferry service???? Not likely, I reckon the fare would be \$20.00 each way, and besides, it would take this government 25 years to get it on the move, what with looking into it."

Ref: Rick T of Melbourne 10/6/08

"I love how all the positive folks out there embrace this new and pretty innovative plan with a simple 'nup, wont work' for whatever professional opinion and belief they may hold. Go you good things!"

Ref: Rhet Torrick 10/6/08

"I think it's a great idea. Many major cities in the world utilise their waterways to ease their traffic problem. 30 minutes from Werribee to City is a good run during peak hours. I think if it works, they should start thinking ferry service from places like Geelong, Frankston, St Kilda and all the beachside suburbs to ease our never ending peak hour traffic problem."

Ref: Ed of Melbourne 10/6/08

"What a great idea.....An express service servicing the western suburbs.....It will make it so much better than catching the dreaded train.....It's a shame it can't be in place quicker."

Ref: Vince of Werribee 10/6/08

"I doubt this will work. The boat speed limit is severely restricted once you get on to the Yarra around the Westgate Bridge so I doubt 30 minutes Werribee to Docklands could be achieved. Sounds like nothing more than a bit of self promotion to try and drive property sales at this new development in Werribee south. Unfortunately our bay and river just isn't geared up for mass transport via ferries like Sydney."

Ref: Simon of Melbourne 10/6/08

"Excellent idea. Hopefully it could also possibly include a service to Geelong, Frankston and other bay side suburbs."

Ref: ehoward 10/6/08

From the Banner

"Wyndham Council's director of economic development Greg Aplin welcomed the idea. 'It uses a transport corridor which has not been considered before', he said. 'It would relieve the pressure on our freeways and fixed rail and comes at a time when bold solutions are required to the city's traffic problems. As a council we support anything which would provide additional transport capacity for our residents', Mr Aplin said.

"Werribee South Ratepayers Association spokesman Nik Tsardakis said Port Phillip had been an underused resource for years. 'There's certainly merit in providing an alternative source of public transport for our residents. It also seems likely it would get off the ground significantly quicker than the timeline we've seen in the past for new roads'."

Ref: Cameron Tait, Werribee Banner, 11/06/08

Comment: The Federal and the Victorian State Governments have copped a walloping (and probably deservedly so) from the media for giving away \$70 million for a project that was going to happen anyway. Imagine the accolades if they had invested in more public transport! Coincidentally \$70 million is around the cost of 10 hovercraft – a truly innovative local industry. The hovercraft proposal is quite different to the Werribee ferry mentioned above but it is interesting to see the generally positive response to ferries as a transit mode. My research indicates that for several reasons the Werribee proposal would struggle but it's good to see some innovative thinking around transport orientated development.

Humming Along

"...Demand for Hummers - the imposing four-wheel-drives perceived as the face of fuel-guzzling motoring - is still strong despite higher petrol prices. Even though it costs \$120 to fill a Hummer, they are so popular that dealers across the city are struggling to keep up with demand for the five-cylinder, 3.7-litre vehicles. ... The giant vehicles usually get a reaction from other drivers, but for one owner, John Tsagaroulis, it is not always the sort he'd like. 'You get people cutting you off and trying to drag-race you at the lights - I think they just see this big car and want to get at you', [he] said. 'I knew it was going to cost a lot for petrol when I bought it. I just don't like small cars, so it was this or another type of four-wheel-drive. I use it for driving the kids to soccer and on the weekend. We don't use it every day. The price of petrol is a pain, but that's what you get with a big car'."

Ref: Paul Bibby, SMH, 11/6/08

And Also ...



'Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for choosing to fly with Mandarin Airlines. As we taxi out to the runway please make yourself comfortable.....and for those of you sitting on the right side of the plane.....please ignore our other.....um.....airliner.....'

Ref: <http://home.tampabay.rr.com/sccinfo/scchumor.htm>