

Hollow Men?

"The previous [Federal] government made it through an entire decade with a two-pronged environment policy of denying problems and insulting environmentalists. The current Government's policy is not to annoy anyone very much. Every few months, under pressure from cranky dyspeptics who think keeping the earth from turning into a cinder is more important than making rich people richer, a government spokesperson comes out and gets a steely look in his eye and says the problem is really bad and we have to do something right away. Then he goes back and rests up for a few months.

"Meanwhile, there's this thing people are talking about called an emissions trading scheme that we might do in a couple of years. A lot of people don't understand it, but the important thing is that it's complex and convoluted enough to play with exceptions and arcane procedures that make it possible to manipulate and hedge and hide details here and there and make sure the right people don't get unhappy. Oh well, it must be good environment policy because it was designed by a fully qualified economist.

"The Opposition says we shouldn't rush into action against climate change. Environmentalists of a certain age must be shaking their bloody, unbowed, grey heads over that one. It's a credit to their maturity and devotion to purpose that they're not jumping up and down jeering 'nyah, nyah, toljaso'. Forty years ago they said we should be building well-insulated houses with double-pane windows and roof overhangs, positioned to take advantage of the sun. Builders gave us Georgian houses on cul-de-sacs. Incorporate water storage into domestic design, they suggested. We got spas. Plant crops suited to the Australian climate, they advised. Rice and cotton flourished. Produce fuel-efficient cars and explore alternative ways to power them. Performance cars and four-wheel-drives grew by litres and bounds and Australia lags way behind other countries in the uptake of hybrids".

Ref: John Cameron, The Age, 21/8/08

Flying High on Weed III

"Jatropha-refined fuel is ... significantly cheaper than crude oil. J.P. Morgan & Chase have estimated that jatropha fuel could cost about \$US43 (\$A50.23) a barrel, or about one-third of yesterday's closing price in Singapore of \$US132.65 a barrel for jet kerosene. Jatropha fuel is also said to produce about half the harmful carbon emissions of fossil fuel."

Ref: Geoff Easdown, Herald Sun, 27/8/08

Problems with the Car Industry

"The Government . . . has highlighted its commitment to actually see a sustainable automotive industry in this country, a much greener automotive industry in this country and an industry which is able to much more rapidly adapt to the changing market conditions . . .," [Industry and Innovation Minister Kim Carr] told the National Press Club. Former Victorian premier Steve Bracks recommended a doubling of Labor's promised \$500 million green car innovation fund, and to replace the Automotive Competitiveness and Investment Scheme with a new Global Automotive Transition Scheme providing \$350 million in annual subsidies to the industry over a 10 year period to 2020. The industry is under severe strain following a series of layoffs in recent months. Unconfirmed reports suggest the most recent casualties are contract engineers previously engaged by Holden in Adelaide. The industry is bracing for another blow if the Greens and independents succeed in securing changes to the Rudd Government's luxury car tax. The changes sought would have the effect of exempting fuel efficient luxury cars, delivering a competitive price advantage to a range of imported cars at the expense of the local industry."

Ref: Mark Kenny, The Advertiser, 4/9/08

Comment:

So, should we really be subsidising fuel inefficient cars? And why do 'struggling farmers' need to buy luxury cars?

Changes in the Car Industry

"Carmaker Daimler AG and utility RWE AG say they will begin a joint electric car and electricity filling station test project in the German capital, called 'E-Mobility Berlin'. ... RWE said it will handle the development, installation and operation of about 500 electricity charging stations, the electricity and central control of the system. ... Daimler's Smart Electric Drive and Mercedes Benz electric vehicles will be driven with lithium-ion batteries developed specifically for use in the cars. Daimler said compared to conventional batteries, the technology provides a greater range and a shorter charging time, even with smaller and lighter batteries. ... Both companies said the payment system will take the form of the exchange of data between a special in-car communication system and the intelligent electricity charging points for 'effective, customer-friendly and convenient everyday operation'. Essen-based RWE said the charging points will be installed at customers' homes, workplaces and in public parking areas."

Ref: Macquarie Radio Network, 7/9/08

Congestion

"We know that urban congestion, if left unaddressed, will cost some \$20 billion by the year 2020. That's a good example of why this is not just an economic issue, but a social issue because many working parents are spending more time commuting to and from work in their cars, than they are at home with their kids. That's why this requires coordinated action from the National Government, from state governments and from the private sector." **Ref: Federal Transport Minister Anthony Albanese, Ch 9 News, 31/8/08**

RACV Calls for Road Charging

"Victoria's peak motoring organisation has backed a radical plan that would see motorists tolled for every kilometre they drive. Known as road charging, the scheme would replace existing taxes such as fuel excise and registration. Charges would be adjusted according to time and congestion levels to try to manage traffic flow. The idea has been floated by the RACV, which represents 1.9 million Victorian motorists ..."

Ref: Ashley Gardiner, Herald Sun 28/8/08

Carpooling & Bus Lanes in Tasmania

"A fuel summit called by Tasmanian Premier David Bartlett during the recent petrol price spike has generated 'dozens' of ideas. Just weeks after taking office, Mr Bartlett announced the summit in July as unleaded fuel in Hobart topped \$1.75 per litre and politicians around the country felt the heat. Mr Bartlett made a commitment to encouraging the state's 25,000 public servants to a car pooling website and to public transport bus lanes. 'We have tens of thousands of cars on the road on the Midlands Highway and on the Bass Highway every day and I want to look for opportunities to reduce our fuel consumption', he told reporters. Mr Bartlett was adamant about bus lanes. 'If it means there is a bit more congestion on the remaining lanes then that will be a clear indicator to Tasmanians that they should consider public transport as a real alternative', he said. The 120 summit delegates separated into six discussion groups to tackle subjects such as public transport, alternative fuels and transport efficiency. They came up with dozens of other ideas which the premier has pledged to consider, including free public transport for students travelling to and from school, and for seniors."

Ref: Sky News, 5/9/08

Lead Wait: Growing Old More Quickly

"Millions of people will grow old faster than they should because of past exposures to lead in petrol, a startling series of studies indicates. The studies, carried out at American universities, show that the toxic metal which has remained in the bodies of everyone born in Britain before it was finally banned from fuel at the turn of the millennium accelerates ageing by up to six years, causing loss of memory and difficulties with language. They add to a growing body of research that suggest that the lead, thousands of tons of which were pumped out across industrialised countries, including Australia, in a highly breathable form every year for decades is having far wider, longer-lasting and more devastating effects than anyone suspected when it was originally removed [from fuel]. ... The discoveries on ageing from research at Johns Hopkins University in Maryland and the University of Michigan are based on the ability of lead to accumulate and lie hidden in the bones. This has made it possible to measure middle-aged to elderly people's past exposure and relate it to their process of mental decline. The Johns Hopkins researchers looked at 1000 people aged 50 to 70 ... They found that the higher the dose the more they suffered from 'accelerated ageing', with a deteriorating ability to think, learn, remember and express themselves. The ones with the most lead aged up to six years faster than those with the least."

Ref: Geoffrey Lean, Canberra Times, 2/9/08

Transit Award

"Yarra Trams has won the 'Transdev Marketing Innovation Award' for tramTRACKER™, beating other public transport operators from around the world including France, Italy and the UK. It's a great win for Melbourne with tramTRACKER™ proving increasingly popular with customers wanting realtime tram arrival information ..."

Ref: Yarra Trams Tramlines #13, 13/8/08



Art Deco

Billboard at the National Gallery of Victoria August 2008

Newsletter Feedback

On: 'A Shift in Attitude I' {#74}

"I love these newsletters. Thank you so much for doing all the research for me and emailing it in an easy to read format. It was my one way of staying in touch with sustainable transport issues whilst I was pregnant and whilst playing mum. I particularly like the articles on the suggested behaviour change from larger to smaller vehicles. Sadly however, I'm not sure that it's entirely true. After the birth of Leo, I was put into a mothers group set up by the council. In the second session, the conversation was dominated by who owned which car and aspirations for newer, bigger vehicles. My protests about the environmental impact of such cars fell on deaf ears, so I took the road of the rising petrol prices. Unbelievably, the view was that it was worth paying the extra to have an SUV! Apparently a small baby just cannot fit into a small fuel efficient car, let alone on a train. I am however pleased to report that Leo loves catching the train and the sound and motion sends him to sleep - and a one hour train nap is worth its weight in gold!"

Ref: **Gabrielle Harris, 28/8/08**

On: 'Lighter, Safer, Cheaper Cars?' {#75}

"30 years. Not bad for the car industry. That's how long ago one of our lectures in my Metallurgy course said cars will soon have Magnesium alloys as well as Aluminium alloys to save weight. The only problem with the saving of 10kg now in the engine block is that each passenger is probably 10 kg heavier than 30 years ago as they don't walk as much and there are now electric motors for windows instead of lighter manual method plus lots of other nick nacks ..."

Ref: **Paul Judd, 4/9/08**

On: 'Victorian Transport Summit' {#76}

"On the evening of that closed forum in Melbourne, I was fortunate-enough to attend a public forum in Mt Alexander Shire, where a range of exciting projects are under way. They are doing a lot in regard to integrated transport planning and normalising human-powered transport (walking and cycling). Particularly, they are negotiating with V-line about access to trains by cyclists and people with mobility aids, and they are linking the railways to their walking and cycling plans. Those plans, in turn are linked to their public health planning. All very exciting and encouraging."

Ref: **John Harland, 8/9/08**



Why our trains are jam-packed.

Obesity

"More than 3.7 million Australians are now obese, placing a \$58 billion burden on the nation, according to an analysis labelled 'tragic and frightening'. The number of Australians with obesity-related health problems such as Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, osteoarthritis and some types of cancer has also

skyrocketed. The report, issued today, reveals that the size and cost of the obesity epidemic have been vastly underestimated, Diabetes Australia President Gary Deed says. ... The organisation commissioned Access Economics to report on the 'growing economic costs of obesity in 2008'."

Ref: **Danielle Cronin, Canberra Times, 22/8/08**

Ride2School (in Victoria)

"Each year, Ride2School calculates greenhouse gas emissions saved by schools registered with the program. A staggering 2098 tonnes of emissions were saved by students walking and riding to school between Feb-Aug this year. This is equivalent to over 41 million black balloons of greenhouse gas emissions, or the average annual emission output of 175 Victorian households. Emissions savings are calculated on the basis of students walking or riding an average of one kilometre to and from school once a week. The actual number of black balloon emissions saved is expected to be much higher, as many students travel longer distances and more frequently. Registered schools collect data from students through the monthly 'Hands Up! Survey' by asking them how they travelled to school: 'Hands Up! if you walked, rode, came by car or public transport'..."

Ref: **Meeghan Auhl, Communications Coordinator - Ride2School, Bicycle Victoria, 10/9/08**

The Pub and Public Transport

"It's the news that would have been unthinkable 10 years ago - Ireland is turning its back on the pub. The country's drinks industry is suffering considerably with pubs closing at the rate of one a day ... But surely the news that Ireland is beginning to dry out is positive for the health of a nation renowned for being as soaked in alcohol as rain? Anthony Foley, of Dublin City University Business School, who compiled the report for DIGI [the Drinks Industry Group of Ireland] does not think so. ... 'Pubs are good for social cohesion. People meet in pubs, gather and form a sense of community', he said. Foley feels that current trends, where 50 per cent of alcohol consumption in Ireland occurs in the home, will not be reversed. 'Unless public transport was improved dramatically, we will never go back to the good old days of the pub,' he said."

Ref: **The Age, 20/8/08**

Melbourne's Tender Trams & Trains

"The competing tenderers to run Victoria's tram and train networks have been named by the Victorian Government. Two companies will compete for the chance to run Melbourne's tram network. KeolisDownerEDI (KDR) and TransDev, which operates Yarra Trams, have been asked by the Victorian Government to submit tenders. A third company had expressed interest but failed to meet the 'stringent criteria' to run the network.

"For the trains, Metro Trains Melbourne (MTM), Veolia Transport and KeolisDownerEDI (KDR) have been selected from a field of six to continue with the tender process. Veolia Transport is the parent company of Connex which currently operates the metropolitan train network and MTM is a consortium of Hong Kong's MTR Corporation, UGL Rail and John Holland. The tender process is expected to be complete by mid-2009 with successful train and tram operators in place by December 2009." Ref: F R Perry & Associates Newsletter, Aug 2008

Melbourne Airport Link

"A rail link to the Melbourne Airport is off the agenda after Public Transport Minister Lynne Kosky locked in SkyBus for another five years. Just a month after Premier John Brumby said booming numbers of jetsetters had put an airport train line back on the drawing board, Ms Kosky said buses were meeting airport needs. But she refused to reveal details of the five-year contract, which was not put to tender. SkyBus boosted patronage by 17 per cent last year, moving 1.6 million passengers. In the same time, airport passenger numbers boomed 8 per cent to 24.3 million. While Ms Kosky said the monopoly deal with SkyBus didn't rule out a rail link in the future, she said the service was good for commuters. Melbourne Airport has called for a rail link." Ref: F R Perry & Associates Newsletter, Aug 2008

And Also ...

"An elderly woman misunderstood instructions while checking in at Sweden's main airport and was whisked down a baggage chute after she placed herself instead of her luggage on the belt, media reported today. The 78-year-old woman ... lay down on an unmanned baggage belt in the belief she was following check-in instructions ... She was quickly swept off to the baggage handling centre, where staff members helped get her back on her feet. The woman suffered no serious injury and caught her flight as planned." Ref: Brisbane Times, 28/8/08

Problems with Oil

"Every year some 3,500 cargo vessels as well as more than 200 oil tankers and chemical carriers navigate through Australian waters, including near environmental icons such as Queensland's Great Barrier Reef and WA's Ningaloo Reef." Ref: Federal Ministerial Media Release 28/8/08

Hummer Stunt

"Green groups and the Victorian Opposition have blasted a police plan to put a fleet of black, military-style Hummers on the streets of Melbourne in an effort to combat alcohol-fuelled violence. GM Australia is donating five H3 model Hummers to Victoria Police as part of the 'Safe Streets' campaign, which is tackling a spate of violent brawls in and around licensed venues. ... 'It's all about profile and increasing the visible police presence', a police media spokesman said in a written statement. ...

"But the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) says the plan to use the beefy, five-cylinder vehicles is environmentally irresponsible and will make late-night revellers feel as if they live in a police state. 'I just don't know that a military vehicle driving through the streets is going to make people feel safer compared to police walking or on bicycles', ACF climate change campaigner Phil Freeman said. ... Opposition police minister Andrew McIntosh said the plan was nothing more than a 'gimmicky stunt'. ... Mr Freeman said the Government's choice of car was inappropriate considering community concerns about climate change. 'It's a disappointment that Victoria Police would choose a gas-guzzling dinosaur as its public face', he said. 'It sends the wrong message to young Australians who, on the whole, are very interested in doing their bit for the environment'.

"GM today defended the environmental credentials of the Hummer H3, which consumes an average of 14.36 litres of fuel per 100 kilometres, according to the NRMA. 'It's not the best in its class but it's certainly not the worst in its class', GM premium brands director Parveen Batish said. 'Media stories of gas-guzzling monstrosities are completely inaccurate'. ... 'They really liked the vehicle, it obviously appeals to and has some resonance with some younger members of society', he said." Ref: Georgina Robinson, Brisbane Times, 9/9/08

And Also ...

"... It has comfy seats ..." gushed an ecstatic commercial TV News Reporter (9/9/08) as a justification for using the Hummer to patrol Melbourne's streets.