

Submission from Councillor Jon Strachan

To The Rural & Regional & Transport Committee

On the inquiry into The Investment of Commonwealth & State funds in Public Passenger Transport Infrastructure & Services.

As a Councillor for the City of Fremantle in Western Australia I wish to make clear that the views expressed in this submission are of a personal nature and may not reflect those of the City of Fremantle. I thank the Committee for the opportunity to submit on this issue and have kept my submission succinct in respect for the Committee's workload.

Greenhouse Gas generated Global Warming is the greatest challenge facing 21<sup>st</sup> century society; a well run efficient Public Passenger Transport system (PPTS) is one of the cornerstones that will underpin Greenhouse Gas abatement.

- i. For Australia to make the transition to a well run, efficient and well used PPTS it is essential to understand the existing situation, therefore an audit is fully supported. It is necessary for such an audit to take into consideration the diversity of Australia and cannot be a *one size fits all* format. For instance parameters that give a snapshot of the problems facing Australia's Metro Rail systems would be valueless when applied to long haul bus transport. The audit would need to focus on 3 aspects:
  - a. Existing infrastructure quality and coverage.
  - b. What an ideal system would look like.
  - c. The integration of existing transport systems with Urban Planning and identification of changes needed to create infrastructure synergy.
  
- ii. Australians have traditionally embraced the motor car as their preferred form of personal transport. Scientific evidence of Global Warming and Peak Oil publicised at the same time as exponential increases in the cost of fuel have done little or nothing to subdue that 'love affair' with the motor car. For PPTS to take its proper place in Australian society the benefits must outweigh the 'satisfaction' of using the motor car. Significant changes are required, to force a greater take-up in the use of Public Transport. Changes such as:
  - a. Priority for PPTS and freight transport on our trunk roads.
  - b. Allowing increasing car congestion.
  - c. Limiting availability of parking.
  - d. Imposing a *toll* or congestion tax in the CBD.
  - e. Running a coordinated campaign to change public perceptions on car use, similar to the successful anti smoking campaigns.
  - f. Making PPTS frequent, efficient, pleasurable and *hip*. I see ticket prices as secondary in this. Public Transport should not be starved

of funds due to artificially low ticket prices. As an example I can use the train to get from Fremantle CBD to Perth CBD for less than i) the cost of fuel used in driving, ii) the cost to park in Perth or iii) the cost of wear and tear on the vehicle, yet most people still chose to drive that trip. Why? Well, that decision is not based on the cost.

- iii. By and large, provision of PPTS in Australia is left to State Governments with little private investment. In contrast bus services in Hong Kong are provided by private companies, with stiff competition for routes when they become available. The difference is population density. The linking of transport policy to Urban Planning is essential. High density transport oriented developments (TODs) will stimulate demand which in turn will stimulate private investment. That investment need not be limited to provision of transport services; it could also contribute to building stations/bus ports in the basement of large developments in return for density/height.
- iv. Patronage of commuter services, particularly rail are restricted due to the accessibility of train stations. Construction of safe and usable cycle-paths and footpaths are preferable to surrounding stations with huge car parks. Facilitating increased inclusion of bicycles on trains would allow the bicycle to be used at each end of the journey.
- v. Roads and suburban rail have traditionally being funded by State Governments, with occasional assistance from Federal Government through Grants. If Australia is to get the passenger rail services it deserves then there needs to be significant Commonwealth funds invested. The current climate situation is a *state of emergency*. A *state of emergency* related to conflict or terrorism receives limitless funds. The global amount spent on the war in Iraq is in excess of US\$3 trillion (Washington Post March 2008). Global Warming poses a much greater Global threat than Saddam Hussein did. Transport accounts for more than 33% of Australia's energy consumption and of that road transport accounts for over 80% (Australian Bureau of Statistics), clearly this situation requires urgency.
- vi. Future planning should take the energy transition into account. Societies have to change the way they use oil and gas. Renewably generated electric energy is the obvious option for land transport. Electric trains, electric trolley busses, electric trams and electric busses are the only sustainable alternatives.
- vii. In the face of Global Warming a *Business As Usual* approach is no longer appropriate, in any of our endeavours. I am optimistic that the outcome from this Inquiry will be to examine the building blocks Australia needs in place for an efficient PPTS and what existing infrastructure can be integrated into that *grand plan*. What is then required is commitment to

funding and a timetable for implementation. The alternative would be more short term and band-aid solutions.

Again thank you for the opportunity to have input into the Inquiry and I wish you well with your endeavours.

6<sup>th</sup> January 2009

Jon Strachan  
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