

BIC COLUMN – SEPTEMBER

Wheels in Motion

As the days grow warmer in Canberra our Federal politicians return to action, and new ideas blossom in the Spring.

In the month gone past the industry and the cause of public transport received further encouragement, from a number of sources including the Federal Senate and the Australian Labor Party National Platform, in what has already been an encouraging year so far.

Public Transport Inquiry

The Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee presented their report on 'The Investment of Commonwealth and State Funds in Public Passenger Transport Infrastructure and Services'; the inquiry into public transport.

In a sign that the bus industry is being heard, the report drew on several recommendations in the BIC submission to the Senate Inquiry and cited the BIC's submission more than 20 times.

The BIC submission to the Senate Inquiry is on the Homepage of the Ozebus website www.ozebus.com.au.

The report from the Inquiry gives the BIC and the industry a lot of momentum in our lobbying about the need for strong leadership in public transport policy and investment from the Federal Government.

The wheels are in motion and as we draw closer to the Federal Election the BIC will need *your* support, operators and suppliers to the industry, in putting public transport on the electoral map in 2010.

As much as anything else the report highlighted how much work the public transport sector, including the bus industry, with the support of Government have left to do in creating a genuine alternative to the car.

In his response to the report Western Australian Greens Senator Scott Ludlam said there was a long road ahead for public transport.

"The emphasis is now swinging back to public transport, but we have five decades of catch-up ahead of us..."

"...This is a shot across the bows for some states to urgently reassess their attitudes to public transport. There won't be any blank cheques – only states with coherent public transport plans and proposals will benefit. States that retain outdated planning policies favouring freeways over public transport will miss out."

In our lobbying efforts the BIC will be working to ensure that the bus industry plays an integral role in this “catch-up” process, not just in the services we offer to commuters, but in the planning and development stages of public transport projects; particularly the uptake of bus rapid transit systems in urban centres.

The report included the following recommendations:

- The Commonwealth in future negotiation of HACC agreements should be mindful of –
 - The effectiveness of present community transport services;
 - Future transport needs of groups targeted by community transport;
 - Appropriate balance between community transport, regular public transport and taxis to meet those needs; and appropriate division of responsibilities, actions and funding to meet those needs.
- The Australian Government in consultation with stakeholders should establish a national transport research body suitable be a national centre for detailed research into the world’s best practice public transport and active transport.
- Commonwealth funding for public transport should only appear in the context of overall funding for infrastructure projects that meet a strict merit-based criteria. These include an objective assessment of the broader community and economic benefits and the degree to which the sponsoring State Government has adopted an integrated, inter-modal and best practice approach to transport planning and management. The Commonwealth can only make such judgments in the context of broader judgments regarding all competing infrastructure projects that have national significance.
- The Government should investigate options for tax incentives for public transport including estimating their impacts on people’s likely travel behavior
- Government support for behavioural change programs should include measures to encourage ‘buy in’ by employers in promoting sustainable transport in their workforce.
- The Government should amend the FBT statutory formula to remove the incentive to drive FBT cars excessively to reach the next threshold.

What this really means for the bus industry and the cause of public transport is the report recommended the retention of the Infrastructure Australia process for allocating Commonwealth funding to public transport projects.

This is the process which saw \$4.6 billion from the 2009 Federal Budget go to public transport infrastructure projects.

The report also recommended that the Government look at taxation incentives to encourage more people to get out of their cars and onto public transport. The recent BIC submission to the Henry Review of Australia's Future Tax System argued for similar measures.

The Review will report back to the Government in early 2010 and based on early work commissioned by the Treasury we expect recommendations about road pricing reform to encourage public transport use to be included in the report.

This is a good outcome from a process that would not even have been imaginable 8 years ago when the BIC was first established in Canberra. It shows our politicians are starting to recognise the problems of climate change, congestion and fuel prices are not going to go away and that encouraging wider public transport use can be part of the solution.

ALP National Platform

This "new" thinking carried over into the Australian Labor Party National Platform which was developed during the ALP National Conference. This is the policy platform the ALP will take into the next Federal Election.

The BIC participated at the Conference and hosted a "Fringe" breakfast which looked at public transport planning and development in our major cities.

References to public transport featured in 8 of the 11 Chapters of the platform and borrowed some of the language used in the BIC National Moving People Policy Statement and the language the BIC has used in our lobbying to the Government.

The BIC will continue to remind the ALP, especially ahead of the next election, about these "guarantees" in their National Platform and how they can translate into solid policies for leadership in providing Australians in urban and regional centres with real transport choices.

Key highlights in the platform include:

The recognition of public transport as part of the climate change solution in:

Chapter 9 – Tackling Climate Change and Our Environmental Challenges

40. Labor supports the promotion of less greenhouse-intensive forms of transport, including public transport, cycling and walking.

111. Labor recognises the need to promote more transport choices and will pursue strategies to encourage alternative modes of transport, alternative fuels, greater fuel efficiency and lower average vehicle age.

123. Labor notes that the whole community should play a role in climate change actions. This includes the role played by those in our community that deliver quality public services, like local government, water supply, electricity and public transport. These industries take actions every day in a range of services from recycling, water harvesting, demand management and much more. This is a significant

role in making our community environmentally sustainable and fighting climate change. Labor recognises the role played by the broad community and asks the Government to continue to implement a broad range of climate change actions.

And the recognition of the importance of public transport to the economy in:

Chapter 3 – Building a 21st Century Economy

51. Labor recognises that all forms of transport have a role to play in moving people and freight, especially within our major cities. It is essential that an efficient road and rail network, supported by a robust public transport system, co-exist in a way that make our cities more sustainable and liveable.

60. Labor will work with the states and territories, the providers of public transport, to achieve greater use of all forms of public transport, thereby contributing to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and congestion in our major cities.

A full summary of public transport references in the Platform is available at www.ozebus.com.au. The full National Platform is available at www.alp.org.au.

Greenhouse Reporting Requirements

Under Greenhouse Reporting laws, the deadline for registering to report your emissions and energy use expired on August 31st if you were eligible to report for this year.

As a rule of thumb, you are required to report if, in the 08-09 Financial Year your operation exceeded either:

- **2.59 million litres of diesel fuel for a FACILITY THRESHOLD**
- **12.95 million litres of diesel fuel for a CORPORATION THRESHOLD**

The BIC has developed a short guide on your reporting requirements as an operator which will assist you in determining:

- Whether you are required to report
- How to report
- Where to find more information

The information sheet is available on the homepage of the Ozebus website www.ozebus.com.au.

If you are still uncertain about how to report, please contact the Department of Climate Change.

CONTACT THE DEPARTMENT:

Call Warwick Armstrong on (02) 6159 7719 or at reporting@climatechange.gov.au or call general inquiries on 1800 018 831.

2009 BIC NATIONAL CONFERENCE 25-28 October – Hotel Grand Chancellor Hobart

Early bird offers for the 2009 BBIC National Conference end on **OCTOBER 1** so book now, start planning your travel and accommodation early and save yourself money on registrations.

The full Conference program and registration brochure for the BIC National Conference is available on the Ozebus website www.ozebus.com.au.

Next month's column will feature a full Conference Preview to give you a glimpse of what to expect at what we think will be best Conference ever.

I look forward to seeing you in Hobart.

Michael Apps
Executive Director