

BIC COLUMN – FEBRUARY

If knowledge is power then knowing about our industry and about our future role in moving people is the cornerstone on which the BIC's lobbying efforts in Canberra are based.

It is not worth having a voice to Federal Government if we have nothing to say and this is why research plays such an important role in framing the messages we want to deliver.

The months ahead will see the BIC coming to your State following the release of an historic joint report from the Bus Industry Confederation and our partners at the Australasian Railways Association (ARA) and International Association of Public Transport (UITP).

This event is historic because this is the first time the rail and road passenger transport industries have come together in a joint lobbying effort and this is also the first time a clear national land transport policy is being spelled out by industry to Government.

The ARA, BIC and UITP have developed a national plan identifying a set of achievable targets and policies for all levels of Government in Australia.

The report, authored by Professor John Stanley at the University of Sydney and Simon Barrett from LEK Consulting focuses on five key areas where Governments can work together to affect positive change and start dealing with the passenger and freight transport related aspects of some of the key social challenges Australia faces in the future.

Some of the key areas looked at in the report include:

- **Congestion Management** - Working towards acceptable travel times in major cities and reducing the impact of traffic on people's quality of life.
- **Environmental Improvement**- How we reduce transport related greenhouse gas emissions and other forms of pollution especially in our urban centres.
- **Social Inclusion** - Providing adequate mobility options for all, in particular the socially disadvantaged.
- **Health & Safety** - Making healthy transport choices available and fewer accidents and harmful injuries as a result.
- **Energy Security** – Reducing our dependency on fossil fuels.

This subject matter is certainly not new in what we have been saying to Government, but what makes this research unique is that we spell out an action plan for Governments across Australia which looks at putting some real measures behind the broader policy agenda.

One of the key measures discussed in the report is road pricing reform which includes looking at congestion charging as part of an overall package that better reflects the full costs associated with road travel, including congestion costs, accident costs, health costs, road damage, air pollution and noise.

In a recent speech Ken Henry, Treasury Secretary, reflected these sentiments in saying that a look at congestion charging and road pricing would form part of the review of the Australian Taxation system. In his speech Henry called it "...one of the biggest public policy issues of the age" and said:

"Most of the time, most cars impose minimal costs on other road users. However, when vehicles drive on a congested road they impose costs on other drivers. Each driver thinks of their own need to get to their destination, not considering how, by taking up space on the road, they impinge on the ability of other drivers to do so."

In our recommendations to Government we don't just look at a new pricing system, but also ways of encouraging fuel efficiency and the uptake of alternative fuel technology and many more measures the Government can take to deliver the productivity gains and environmental benefits that come from reducing urban congestion.

This is a comprehensive framework that gives the Government the building blocks on which to develop a national land passenger transport policy and gives the BIC and our partners impetus going into this all important year of three state elections and the federal election.

The BIC will be launching this report at Parliament House in March and will support this with a campaign in the media and ongoing advocacy campaign in co-operation with our State Associations.

All BIC Members will receive a copy of this report and it will be available to you through the Ozebus website www.ozebus.com.au or email admin@bic.asn.au or call us on (02) 6247 5990.

The report co-author Professor Stanley featured prominently at a dinner the BIC held for the ALP Infrastructure Committee.

This event was an excellent chance for the BIC and industry representatives to meet with some up and comers and old hands from the Government who share common goals with our industry and our future directions. We are organising something similar with the Opposition.

These events are a valuable way of building a presence and keeping the bus industry's issues at the forefront in the long list of issues and politics in Canberra.

One of the key issues following the resumption of Parliamentary Sitting is of course the Government's proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. Will they or won't they pass it and will Malcolm Turnbull vote against his own party?

As numbers stand the legislation looks unlikely to pass unless some serious compromises are made. The legislation does not include any recognition of the added cost to public transport operators or any solid undertaking to provide compensation for these cost increases through complementary measures to encourage public transport use and develop public transport infrastructure.

This is the position the BIC has been pushing for since the debate about what an Emissions Trading Scheme should include and we will continue to send this message to our Federal Parliamentarians. A plan to develop sustainable transport systems and encourage travel behavior changes amongst Australians is vital if the Government or Opposition are at all serious about addressing the emissions caused by over-reliance on the car.

We don't know yet what the 'complementary measures' to address climate change will be under any new laws and in the year ahead will work to make sure public transport planning and investment from all levels of Government, including the Federal Government remains high on the agenda when climate change strategies are being created by the Government and Department.

Complementary measures are also an integral part of the Tony Abbot alternative to the Emissions Trading Scheme and we will watch this closely as more details are put into the plan and some costings are made to assess the impact that this alternative plan might have on your business.

The game is most certainly in full swing as we move into this election year and the BIC is working hard to make sure your views, as the Australian Bus and Coach Industry, are heard.