

BIC COLUMN

Roll up roll up!

Election time is closing fast in Canberra and in the last few months we have seen a raft of policy announcements from the Government and Opposition covering health, education, maternity leave, the environment and just about anything else that isn't nailed down.

The BIC has been working hard to make sure transport and most importantly passenger transport features in the policy debate ahead of the election.

Passenger transport took a major step this month with a combined research and advocacy effort by the BIC, the Australasian Railways Association and the International Public Transport Association culminating in a dinner held in Canberra where we had Minister Albanese, Shadow Minister for Sustainable Development Bruce Billson and Australian Greens Transport Spokesperson Scott Ludlam presenting their vision for Australia's passenger transport future.

The dinner was an opportunity to present 'Moving People – Solutions for a Growing Australia' to Minister Albanese and launch the document as an agreed policy position on passenger transport for buses and railways.

Minister Albanese received the report with enthusiasm and outlined his view for a program based shift in the Federal Government's approach to public transport towards a more structured approach to the urban land use and planning and transport.

Bruce Billson, a long time supporter of passenger transport improvement through his role in developing the Sustainable Cities Report for the previous Government outlined a vision for passenger transport which echoed the Minister's ideas and also emphasised the need to use what we have better through better co-ordination of resources.

Senator Ludlam a strong advocate for public transport, who took the one of the lead roles in delivering the recent Senate Inquiry into Passenger transport, spoke clearly about the Greens long held position that the Federal Government should take the lead in co-ordinating and improving passenger transport networks throughout Australia.

It was a very positive night for the cause of public transport with an audience of varying backgrounds there to get involved in the discussion we need to have about how to best deliver passenger transport and how to best design land transport in the future.

The report we delivered to Minister Albanese included a seven point action plan, which the BIC, in conjunction with the ARA and UITP will build on and advocate for in our lobbying efforts.

This seven point action plan clearly outlines what needs to be done and is worth including in this month's column:

1. **Increased investment in public transport.** Continue to increase ongoing funding by all levels of government in public transport to meet existing and future demand, through increased service levels, improved connectivity (urban and regional) and wider transport choice.
2. **Freight capacity investment and efficiency improvements.** Invest in freight infrastructure to reduce road congestion, and improve road safety, urban amenity and the environment.
3. **Road pricing reform.** Replace existing excise and registration charges with charges that better reflect the real costs associated with road travel, including congestion, accidents, health, road damage, air pollution and noise. Allocate generated revenue to improved public transport services.
4. **Improved accessibility for all.** Provide adequate mobility choices that provide reasonable and equitable access to family and friends, jobs, shops, services and recreation.
5. **More compact, walking and cycling friendly urban settlements.** Improve the long term integration of urban and transport planning to deliver mixed use, cities with multiple activity centres and higher development densities along urban public transport corridors. Aggressively pursue walking and cycling strategies.
6. **Improved fuel efficiency.** Set mandatory fuel efficiency targets to align Australia's vehicles with European standards within the next five years.
7. **Improvements in transport research and information.** Implement an integrated national transport research program that consolidates and extends existing knowledge of transport around Australia.

This report also contains recommended actions which the Federal, State and Territory Governments can deliver. These include road pricing reform, taxation reform through the Fringe Benefits Tax system, funding travel behaviour change programs and on the freight front increasing the freight capacity of our networks.

There are several more programs and recommendations in the full report which can be viewed on the homepage of the Ozebus website www.ozebus.com.au. If you have any feedback about the research call me on (02) 6247 5990 or email admin@bic.asn.au. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on what was described at the dinner as the "best ever public policy document in the area of transport".

The handover of the research and action plan closely followed the release of the '*State of Australian Cities*' report from the Major Cities Unit at Infrastructure Australia.

The report highlighted some real challenges we face as a nation in the next 40 years with the population expected to reach 36 million and urban congestion expected to cost \$20 billion a year by 2020.

Alarminglly the report also found that car dependency is growing at a faster rate than the population, which if the predicted 36 million by 2050 is right, leaves us in danger of our cities becoming gridlocked messes.

More than anything this research from the Government indicates that they know there is a problem and the BIC with its partners will be working to provide solutions from an industry perspective, based on strong research and policy.

It's not only Federal elections that the BIC is getting involved in from a lobbying perspective, we have also been moving to the more "co-operative federalism" approach I mentioned in a previous column with our State Associations in helping them achieve solid outcomes and undertakings from the parties involved in the Tasmanian State election.

We recently participated in a forum hosted by the Tasmanian Bus Association where all major parties; Labor, Liberals and the Greens. It was an excellent event and all three parties committed to improving passenger transport.

The BIC will be on the road with workshops explaining our joint research and how to use it in your lobbying efforts soon coming to a place near you. Further details of the workshops will be released when they are finalised.

It has been a big month in what is shaping up to be a big year for the BIC and the industry and we are only a quarter of the way through the year, exciting times in Canberra.