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CARBON TAX MISSES THE BUS ON REFORM

The peak body representing the bus and coach industry said today's climate change plan announcement missed out on delivering essential reform in passenger transport and how we will move people today and in the future.

"The Prime Minister used 45 million cars off the road as a measurement of the success of this policy in reducing carbon emissions, yet maintained the status quo for cars in relation to fuel costs," said Executive Director of the Bus Industry Confederation (BIC), Michael Apps.

"The Government's climate change plan identified car use as the highest source of household emissions and recognised the impact on household budgets of driving a car, but did nothing to encourage viable alternatives to the car.

"A full bus takes 40 cars off the road and getting rid of a second car can save a family more than \$5000 a year; if we get our public transport systems right and get motorists using them, there are clear emissions reductions and economic benefits," said Apps.

Apps said the exemption from fuel price rises for buses until 2014 did not go far enough in providing price incentives for public transport and excise charges for buses and coaches should be aligned with rail.

"A diesel train currently pays no excise on fuel, but will be subject to the 6.2 cents per litre carbon price from July 1 2012.

"Under the carbon price, buses should be treated in the same way," said Apps.

"We are not the trucking industry; we serve a different purpose which in the long run reduces carbon emissions, we are a 'good carbon' transport provider and need to be treated as such," said Apps.

Apps said the bus industry is currently lumped in with trucks and pay 38 cents per litre in excise which is made up of the road user charge with the remainder claimed back as a fuel tax credit.

Apps said buses should only be required to pay the carbon price for transport of 6.2 cents per litre carbon price and no excise.

"The bus industry is the workhorse of public, school and coach passenger services in our cities and the only form of public and school transport in most of regional Australia; it must be supported by the climate change plan.

"It makes no sense, especially in the context of the Government's recent National Urban Policy, to avoid explicitly providing big incentives for people to make an alternative travel choice to the car," said Apps.

"Buses and public transport are part of the solution to the economic cost of congestion, the environmental impact of transport related carbon emissions and the mobility needs of our communities and the plan should recognise this by incentivising public transport use now."

Apps said further to price incentives, polling by Auspoll in late June showed 72 per cent of Australians want to see some of the revenue from the Carbon Tax invested in public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure to give them transport choices and this investment should be an addition to the climate change plan.

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Contacts: Michael Apps, Executive Director, Bus Industry Confederation, 0418 487 930

The full polling report from Auspoll is available on the Ozebus website, www.ozebus.com.au.