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Hanna Jaireth
Secretary
Assembly Standing Committee on Planning & Environment
Canberra ACT

Re 'Public Transport Inquiry'

"...Australia where, as we know, *public transport* is intended as a form of punishment for people who do not have a cars ..." (Professor Jenny Stewart, Univ of Canberra , Canberra Times, May 7, 2007)

Alas! As a resident and ardent user of Canberra's bus system for over 30 years, I can attest that the above statement has become only too true for the Nation's capital.

It is therefore very timely for your Committee to take the 2004 publication of the relatively well-documented "*Sustainable Transport Plan for the ACT*" as a basis for analysis . Indeed your inspection of this Report will reveal if there has been any real progress since 2004 – and also ascertain what, if any, Government commitments are in train?

May I suggest that the Committee interviews the previous Planning Minister, Simon Corbell (and the relevant professionals), who wrote a visionary forward to this 2004 Report, and, of course, ascertain the thinking of the recently-appointed incumbent, Andrew Barr.

Hallmarks of a well-utilised city public transport system

The most obvious factors are those of reasonable speed, absolute reliability, good frequency, cheapness and within a walking distance of say 500m.

'A chain is only as strong as its weakest link'.

Currently, the system's most obvious flaw is poor frequency (realised now by most Canberrans. An unprecedented downgrading occurred in Dec 2006 when weekday bus frequencies, in most suburbs, were cut from half-hourly to hourly services between 9am & 5pm! These cuts were rightly seen as draconian and, moreover, no regionally advertised public meetings were called to allow a modicum of consultation. As a result the public at large views bus travel as a transport mode to be avoided if at all possible; a mode to be left to the young and old, the poor, and for others, who do not drive or do not have cars; yes a "punishment" according to Professor Stewart.

(1 of 2)

Urgent Priorities Now for Upgrading Use & Image of Public Transport in the ACT

1. Frequency of suburban services to be immediately restored to at least half-hourly.
2. The ACT Government response to mobility in an era of climate change & oil depletion:

With the belated Federal Government realisation of the link between carbon emissions and climatic warming the issue of lowering transport emissions becomes ever more urgent.

Although the role of public transport - as well as walking & cycling - was certainly recognised in the 2004 ACT's '*Sustainable Transport Plan*', as helping to reduce greenhouse emissions, the extreme urgency of their rapid diminution was not canvassed. A target of just 14% emissions was suggested by 2026 (Fig 22)! Scientists are now calling for reductions of the order of 80% by 2050 (see, for example, the piece "Doing the numbers on climate change basics", [Canberra Times, April 27, 2007] by Dr Andrew Macintosh).

The public needs to be informed of the total & per capita carbon emissions used in transporting ourselves in the ACT; also, of course, the percentage of major components: viz. car, bus & taxi. Trends must be known & targets need to be set and publicised in the media - just as we now do, with no expense spared, in curtailing our water use.

Unfortunately, projected high rates of population growth in Australia as a whole (now an extra million every four years) -- and thereby influencing Canberra growth levels - will make an efficient public transport system for the ACT even more imperative.

Obviously, public transport must, per force, be a major part of the *ACT Govt's climate change strategy*, which is reported to be due out in a few weeks.

Sincerely,

Chunhoff L. Wate

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P.S. I would be pleased to appear, in person, before the Committee.

Doing the numbers on climate change basics

SEVERAL weeks ago, Malcolm Turnbull accused the ALP of being fanatical about climate change. Now the head of the Business Council of Australia, Michael Chaney, has suggested that the ALP's target of reducing greenhouse emissions by 60 per cent on 2000 levels by 2050 was "plucked out of the air" without the necessary research.

Is it true? Has the ALP gone feral in its hunt for green votes? To judge, it is necessary to go through the basics of climate policy.

Australia is a party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which aims to stabilise the atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases at a level that would prevent "dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system".

There is growing scientific consensus that in order to avoid dangerous climate change, policy-makers should do everything possible to ensure global average surface temperatures do not increase by more than 3 degrees on pre-industrial levels (roughly 2.5 degrees on 1990 levels).

Beyond this point, the human and environmental costs could be very high and

there is a risk of run-away climate change. To limit temperature increases to 3 degrees on pre-industrial levels, the evidence suggests the atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases must be kept to between 450 and 550 parts per million of carbon dioxide equivalent.

At 550 parts per million, there is still a significant risk average temperature increases could exceed 3 degrees. There are also likely to be significant costs, including sea-level increases of several metres.

Given these factors, and the irreversibility of climate change (at least on a human time scale), a lower stabilisation target of between 450 and 500 parts per million would seem prudent.

However, the chances of limiting the concentration of greenhouse gases to the lower bounds of this range are rapidly diminishing.

At present, the concentration is about 430 parts per million and is rising steadily each

year. Confining the increase to 450 would require a Herculean effort. After all, there are still members of the Federal Government and business leaders that don't believe climate change is happening.

Global emissions are currently about 45 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year, while the rate of natural absorption is only five billion tonnes.

If a 450 parts per million carbon dioxide equivalent was adopted, it would require a dramatic drop in emissions over a short time frame.

Hence, for political reasons, people are now suggesting a 550 target is more feasible, even though it entails greater risks.

There are different pathways that could be adopted to stabilise the atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases at 550. However, the science suggests that to achieve this target, global emissions must be cut by at least 25 per cent between

2005 and 2050, or from about 45 to

34 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.

Policy-makers, and a growing band of entrepreneurs, are beginning to realise that the legal right to emit greenhouse gases will soon become a valuable commodity. Given this, there is likely to be a strong push to distribute these rights between countries on a per capita basis - an equal amount for each person.

If this occurs, and assuming the global population reaches about nine billion in 2050 as projected, annual emissions will have to be reduced to approximately 3.7 per person, by 2050. Australia's population is expected to be 28.1 million. Multiplying this figure by 3.721 of carbon dioxide equivalent per person equals about 104.5 million tonnes.

Australia's annual emissions are now about 570 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. Hence, Australia's annual emissions will need to be reduced by about

80 per cent by 2050. Against this benchmark, the ALP's 60 per cent target seems to be an underestimate of what will be required as it would only result in Australia's emissions falling to about 220 million tonnes in 2050. At this level, Australia's per capita emissions are likely to be about 2½ times higher than the required global average.

Purchasing credits from abroad could help accommodate our higher than average emissions but it could be very costly, potentially far more costly than reducing per capita emissions to a level nearer the global average. When the science is used as the guide, the ALP's target can be seen for what it is - a political compromise that, while less than ideal, is the start of the reform process. Certainly it is far from being fanatical or economically irresponsible as suggested by Turnbull and Chaney.

At this point, Australia's political and business leaders shouldn't be debating about whether we can "afford" to cut emissions by 60 per cent. They should be discussing how best to achieve the target.

Andrew Macintosh is deputy director of the Australia Institute, a Canberra-based think tank.

Labor's greenhouse target is a political compromise and just the start of the reform process, argues **ANDREW MACINTOSH**.

FOR MOST AUSSIES IT'S A STEAL

Carla Tami

7/5/07

We'll take anything, even if it's bolted down with a ball and chain, according to research on our light-fingered brigade.



Jenny Stewart

WE ALL know that Australia is the best country in the world. At least it would be if only it would rain properly again.

But we do have our foibles. As recent events in Virginia so graphically demonstrated, gun-related crime is much more common in the United States than it is here. But rates of stealing in its various forms, according to data from the Australian Institute of Criminology and US government statistics, are considerably higher in Australia.

Indeed, if we compare Australia with a conspicuously law-abiding country like Japan, our national light fingers become all the more noticeable. Tour operators warn Japanese women visiting Australia not to leave their handbags lying around, as they are inclined to do at home, apparently, because that will be the last they see of them.

We might even say that, among the wealthier nations, we have something of a propensity for thieving. Interpol data from 2000 (the last that is readily available) suggests that only Britain comes close in terms of stealing from people, houses and businesses.

Many of the culprits are no doubt drug addicts needing money for their next fix - and much of the thieving is well-organised and semi-professional.

Australians, at least some of them, will steal anything, even if it is bolted down. And public property is as vulnerable as goods that are private.

I recall one Monday morning when the pupils and teachers arrived at a Canberra school to find its beautiful aluminium playground benches had disappeared over the weekend. Someone armed with cutting tools had cut them off at the base, because aluminium was fetching a good price at the time.

Even in a town as prosperous as Canberra, it is rare to find someone whose house has not been broken into. The police often say it is "just kids", when bits and pieces, rather than the whole box and dice, are stolen, although one wonders what these same kids gravitate to as they get older.

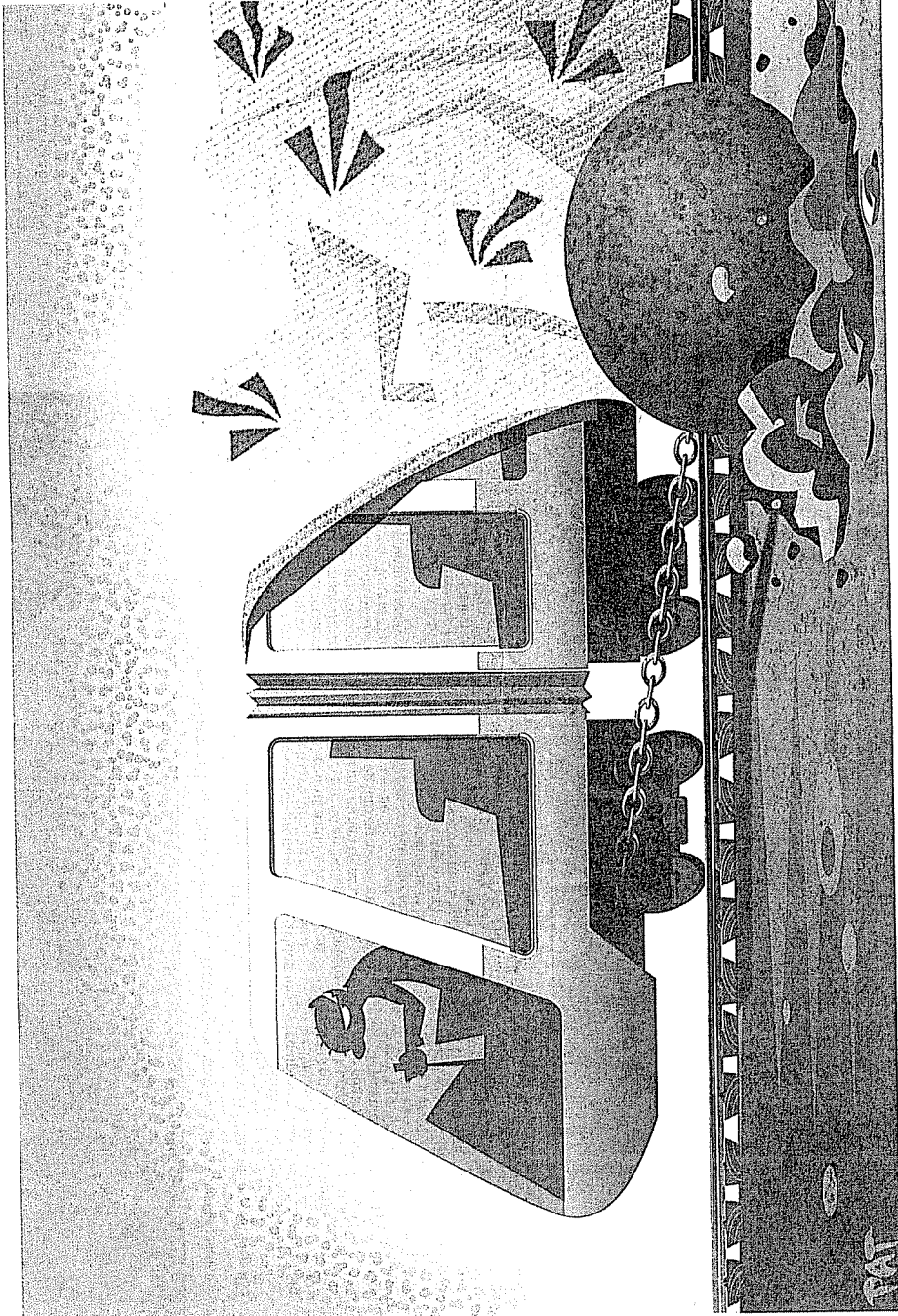
Some, at least, seem to specialise in knocking over small businesses, such as the supermarkets still bravely operating in some Canberra suburbs, where they usually go for the cigarettes and alcohol.

Then there is shoplifting.

No one knows how prevalent it is, because stores do not divulge their "shrinkage" figures, and many of the shoplifters are never caught.

Stealing by staff is probably even more prevalent than stealing by customers.

The workman who made newspaper headlines when it was discovered that for years he had been carrying coins out of the



Mint inside his boots was just one of the more colourful cases.

Builders tell me that there is pretty much range warfare on building sites. Sometimes, truckloads of bricks go missing in the night. At least in these cases it is fair to assume that the stolen goods are used in the same industry.

But what, I wonder, happens to all those stolen electronic goods, TVs and so on? Do they end up in pawn shops? Are they recycled through trash and treasure? Or are they bought and sold, knowingly or unknowingly, via the various markets that flourish around the city?

As for the car reburiers, if conventional industry showed as much innovation as these thieves, we would have no problems making our way in the world economy.

I am starting to wonder whether all this nefarious activity might not be something to do with convict stain? Or even some sort

of race-memory of the bushrangers? After all, the area around Canberra was infested with bushrangers in the 1860s, and provided they restricted themselves to shooting the police, rather than ordinary citizens, they seem to have been fairly well-tolerated by the locals.

Indeed, it is said that when Ben Hall and his gang burned down the grocery store at Binda, and in the process, destroyed with it about 500 of the locals' IOUs, few customers could be found who were willing to testify against the gang.

Perhaps cultural differences are more important than we realise. Take the example of fare evasion. On a recent visit to Berlin, I was astounded to find that buying one's ticket on the excellent public transport system was apparently left to the sense of honour of the passenger.

Every station platform had an abundance of ticket machines, and there were other

machines with which to validate one's ticket, but there were no barriers or turnstiles anywhere and, as far as I could see, no ticket inspectors regularly patrolling the trains.

I wondered what would happen if the barriers or checking points were eliminated on train networks in Australia. Even with reportedly suffers from persistent fare evasion, and in Sydney, where it is not uncommon to see the more athletic passengers (or customers, as I suppose we must call them these days) vaulting the barriers, one shudders to think what the locals would do if purchasing one's ticket were voluntary.

Mind you, the primitive nature and often precarious operation of Australian ticket-vending machines can thwart even the most law-abiding passenger.

Even though my German is just sufficient

to make me dangerous, I had no difficulty in selecting and purchasing the correct ticket via the automated vending machines that worked promptly and accurately, every time. And the prices, even after converting from euros to dollars, did not seem excessive.

But the Germans appear to see public transport as a means of moving people quickly and efficiently around their cities, and are determined to invest in their networks to make sure this happens.

It is to be hoped these extraordinary notions do not enter Australia where, as we know, public transport is intended as a form of punishment for people who do not have cars, or (as happened in Melbourne), as a means for running social experiments or the merits of privatisation.

Dr Jenny Stewart is associate professor of public policy at the University of Canberra.

