

## Chairman admits Scoresby study a sham

The Chairman of the Inquiry Panel into the Scoresby Freeway, Professor Rodger Eade, has admitted that the Scoresby Environmental Assessment was a sham, the Sunday Age reported on 28th January. This confirms what the PTUA has been saying for some time now.

The study was a sham because, when the 'public transport alternative' looked like out-performing the Freeway in reducing traffic problems, the project's rules were altered to exclude the option from further evaluation. In addition, the study deliberately excluded the flow-on effects on building Scoresby on the Yarra Valley 'green wedge'. The importance of the Yarra Valley has become dramatically clearer, now that Peter Batchelor's office has admitted that there are plans to continue the Scoresby Freeway through the green wedge.

### Federal funding for Scoresby a 'beat-up'

Some PTUA members have been demoralised by constant media reports that the Federal government is on the verge of funding the Scoresby Freeway and that our campaign is futile. These reports are all classic media 'beat-ups'.

Here is the real position, as set out in a letter to PTUA Committee member Hayden Jones by the Minister's Chief Adviser on transport:

"In reference to the Scoresby project, if this transport corridor was to be built in the future, the Minister would expect the Victorian Government to take a holistic approach in its development and include proposals for a complementary public transport system...In terms of Federal funding for Scoresby, there may be scope to consider assistance for this project following the Federal Government's decision to provide an additional \$400 million for National Highway and Roads of National Importance projects in outer-metropolitan areas across Australia...However, given the Federal/State working group has only just begun to examine project options, it is premature to be considering Federal funding at this time."

Need we say more?



## Lies on Federal road funds

*"The road lobby are telling lies about road funding"*

—Federal Transport Minister John Anderson, ABC Radio, Feb 2001  
We're glad to see Mr Anderson has come round to our point of view! The State government's demand for Federal funding for the Scoresby Freeway has been supported by an increasingly hysterical and dishonest publicity campaign. The State government and its road lobby allies have issued a flurry of press releases complaining that Victoria does not receive its 'fair share' of Federal road funding. PTUA President Paul Mees explained why these claims are false in an opinion piece in The Age of 18 January. Peter Batchelor has not responded. Mr Batchelor did, however, issue a new round of media releases following the hysteria around a book-keeping error in the accounting for Federal fuel excise. Again, the claims were completely without foundation, something that eluded the local media, but was spotted by Alan Ramsey of the Sydney Morning Herald, the nation's senior political reporter (see article reproduced on pages 6-7).

## IN THIS ISSUE

Keeping in Touch .....	2
More Scoresby Stuff .....	2
Citylink Case .....	2
Anger at Increased Fares.....	3
Merri Creek Freeway Latest.....	3

Student Concession Cards.....	4
Letters to the PTUA.....	4
Country Victoria News.....	5
Federal Road Funding.....	6
Upcoming Meeting.....	8

## Keeping in touch...

### PTUA office

Second Floor, 247 Flinders Lane, Melb.  
Telephone: (03) 9650 7898  
e-mail: office@ptua.org.au

### Committee Meetings

Third Tuesday of each month.  
Please call the office for details.

### Membership Enquiries

Graeme Gibson: (03) 9650 7898

### World Wide Web

Our home page is at  
<http://www.ptua.org.au/>

## Committee

Paul Mees — President

Anna Morton — Vice President

Vaughan Williams — Secretary

Les Chandra — Assistant Secretary

Daniel Borowski — Treasurer

Glen Boyce

Roberto D'Andrea      Anthony Morton

Wendy Everingham      Miriam Powell

Hayden Jones      Tim Petersen

Tim Mattingbrooke      David Robertson

# Response to Metropolitan Strategy

The PTUA's submission in response to Challenge Melbourne, the discussion paper for the government's Metropolitan Strategy, called for a new approach to planning. The PTUA is very supportive of the idea of a metropolitan strategy, and were pleased to be invited to join the Reference Group back in May. For the first time in Melbourne's history, there was a promise to have community participation and ecologically sustainable development at the centre of the process.

Unfortunately, Challenge Melbourne places the likelihood that the strategy will be based on either meaningful public participation or ecological sustainability in serious doubt. There are three main problems with the report.

Firstly, the quality of the information provided is poor. Challenge Melbourne is even more vacuous and tendentious than the discussion paper that preceded the Kennett strategy Living Suburbs. For example, the document claims public transport patronage is increasing, when the RMIT Victorian Activity and Travel Survey shows that the share of travel by public transport is declining, and the census shows use of public transport for the journey to work at the lowest level ever, lower (for the first time) even than Brisbane.

Secondly, the report fails to explain how the metropolitan strategy is to be prepared, or by whom. The public is left to assume that the Reference Group must be responsible, but in reality the Department of Infrastructure is doing all the work and simply ignores the Reference Group's advice.

Lastly, while Challenge Melbourne uses the term 'sustainability' repeatedly, but discusses it in such vague and amorphous terms that it is virtually emptied of content. There is to be a "sustainability evaluation framework" prepared by—wait for it—the Australian Road Research Board!

There is no need to have endless philosophical debates about what sustainability means. Other cities have been through this process already and we need not 'reinvent the wheel'. In addition, Victoria and Australia have

## PTUA continues the lobbying...

PTUA committee members and volunteers have been knocking on the doors of State and Federal politicians to press the case for a rethink on Scoresby, and for the State government to carry out its promised independent study of improving public transport in the outer east. To date, we have been to see Kevin Andrews MHR, David Davis MLC, Jenny Macklin MHR and Craig Langdon MLA. More meetings are planned.

PTUA members living in the relevant areas are also encouraged to contact their local MPs. If you're not sure what to say, just contact the office. A delegation to Federal Transport Minister John Anderson, in conjunction with environment and community groups and sympathetic local councils, is also planned.

### Petition and stalls

The PTUA held a successful stall in Ringwood in January, to raise awareness of our campaign among the local community. More stalls are planned, and volunteers are keenly sought. If you would like to volunteer for a stall, please call the office on 9650 7898.

Our petition for public transport alternatives to the Scoresby Freeway now has 2000 signatures, with more arriving daily. We will continue accepting petitions until the end of March.

### Thanks to our donors

The PTUA thanks the following members who have financially supported PTUA campaigns:

Graham Anderson	T Mattingbrooke
JM Anderson	Pauline Middleton
Jean Baker	Stephen Morey
LM Barry	ET Morton
Andrew Bulhat	Rom Orfanelli
G Carr	Davide Parkes
Frank Dean	G Patel
Heather Ellis	Dorothy Pottage
Gardner & Moppert	HA Prentice
Pat Grainger	Harry Rimington
Ted Hamel	Jenny Talbot
GO Hilliard	Richard Todd
W Hopkinson	H Tripp
Julie Hughes	Hugh Waldron
Terry Johnson	RR Watson
Ronald Jones	E Weeks
Tomas Killip	John Young
Ben Koschmann	V Yule
Jason Lee	Blake Zent
Pamela Lloyd	AD Wilson
Lois Loftus-Hills	L Williams

And thanks to all anonymous donors!

## STOP PRESS

### High Court Case Going Ahead

Peter Allan's long-running court case against the City Link taxation concessions has been listed for hearing before the Full Court of the High Court in Canberra, on 23rd and 24th May. Thanks to all those PTUA members whose generous donations have got the case this far.

# Private Operators' New Millenium Message to Passengers: Give Us More Money!

The totally unpublicised abolition of group, family and off peak saver tickets by Melbourne's train companies on New Year's Day was yet another example of the companies' complete disregard for their passengers. Coming at the same time as the second fare increase in six months, it threatened effective price increases of up to 100% for families used to travelling on family tickets, and 50% for travellers previously using off peak saver tickets. This is way above the rate of inflation, to which fares are supposedly indexed.

Connex and Bayside trains claimed the tickets were not popular, and a spokesperson for Connex said that passengers would not know which was the most effective ticket for their needs, so the

ticketing was being rationalised. This is hardly surprising, given that a large proportion of travellers, especially occasional public transport users, probably did not even know that such tickets existed. Is this why Connex and Bayside thought they could get away with scrapping these tickets without anyone really noticing? The fact that even the Transport Minister's office criticised the lack of publicity—but not, interestingly enough, the actual abolition of the tickets—seems to indicate that the move was even a surprise there, which raises many questions about whether the government is fulfilling its

obligations to oversee the running of the privatised transport system.

Fortunately, as a result of the PTUA's efforts, the private operators were forced to (temporarily) reinstate the off-peak tickets. This however was only a partial victory: the companies still intend to replace these tickets with regressive single-mode fares later this year, and fares have still risen by more than can be justified, particularly for country travellers (see accompanying articles).

PTUA members are invited to express their outrage to the Transport Minister, Peter Batchelor, and to their local MP.

## Outrage at Merri Creek Freeway decision

signed international treaties, like Agenda 21, which include concrete commitments, such as using transport and land-use planning to reduce the need to travel and promote shifts to walking, cycling and public transport. It would be a relatively simple matter to extract a rigorous set of criteria and objectives from this background.

The difficulty lies in facing up to the difficult choices that sustainability requires us to make. The road engineers who dominate the Department of Infrastructure don't want to do this, because it might mean giving up some of their cherished freeways.

The one part of the study that has been done well so far is the public forums held late last year. The public produced a clear message, nominating public transport as overwhelmingly the most important issue in every single consultation session, and calling for a change in transport policies. The problem is, the Departmental bureaucrats don't want to change.

The PTUA believes that the next step should be to urgently organise a facilitated discussion among the stakeholders of where the metropolitan strategy should go from here. The Minister for Planning should take part in this discussion. The process needs to be opened up so the community, not road engineers, can decide the future of its city.

The State government has released its decision to build the Merri Creek Freeway, otherwise referred to as the F2, or, more euphemistically, the Craigieburn Bypass. Conservation groups and the PTUA believe that the decision was hasty and flawed, and did not evaluate alternatives to the freeway.

"The Government has pointedly ignored and failed to properly evaluate the only realistic alternatives to the freeway" said Tony Faithfull, Manager of the Merri Creek Management Committee. "They refused to evaluate the alternative package of public transport and rail freight improvements and fixing up the Hume Highway."

Max Sargent, president of Friends of Merri Creek, says his group is outraged that after a year of trying to meet with the planning minister, John Thwaites, the group still has not been consulted by the Minister. He claims that the proposed route will jeopardise the survival of the Growling Grass Frog, which lives in the Merri Creek and surrounding grasslands around Craigieburn.

The decision comes weeks before the release of a report by Bill Russell commissioned by Councils and the Metropolitan Transport Forum on the detailed designs and costings of an alternative package of measures.

"The Government has made a decision in the dark without having all the information. The fact that they rushed into a decision before the Russell report and the frog surveys are complete shows just how

flawed the process is. If the Government thinks that the community is going to sit back and accept this decision they are seriously misguided," Mr Sargent said. Nonetheless, like Scoresby, the Merri Creek freeway is not a fait accompli. It relies on Federal funding to get underway, and every indication is that the holders of the purse strings will require some convincing that the \$400 million freeway is really needed to solve transport problems in northern Melbourne.

Stay tuned for further developments.

## Public Meeting

**Save the Yarra Valley from the Ring-Freeway**

**Monday 26 March at 7.45 pm  
St John's Church Hall**

**Burgundy St (500m H'berg Stn)**

This meeting has been called by the Warringal Conservation Society and the Riverlands Protection Association, in conjunction with the PTUA.

It will discuss the revelation (see last PTUA News) that the government is planning a freeway through the Yarra 'Green Wedge' at Heidelberg and Bulleen. Mr Batchelor has not denied the reports, despite having ample opportunity to do so.

If you can help distribute publicity for the meeting, please contact the PTUA Office on 9650 7898. -

## Broken Promise on Concession Cards

The Bracks Government's reduction of the cost of tertiary statewide student cards, from this year's \$111 to \$75, is a step in the right direction but still leaves a lot to be desired.

Labor's pre-election policy documents on the issue were misleading, giving the impression that real efforts would be made to make concession cards free (or reflect the small administrative cost). However, students will still be paying a large amount of money for the privilege of being entitled to a concession fare!

Currently, students must buy a concession card to be eligible to pay concession fares. They can be fined for fare evasion if they buy concession tickets without holding a concession card.

Large concession card costs, when added to recent fare increases, deter students from using public transport. As a result, students are effectively encouraged to drive, adding to congestion and pollution problems. Occasional users of Melbourne's public transport, including students from regional Victoria, really have to weigh up whether they will recoup their \$75 in concession savings.

Victorian State Governments seem to forget that the whole idea of concession fares is to ease the impact of transport costs on people who have very low incomes, such as students. Other Australian states recognise this, and allow students to use their institution's student cards to show that they are students.

In other words, they don't have to pay for a concession card; they are eligible for concession fares just because they are students! What a revolutionary idea!



## Taken For a Ride By Victrip

The official Victrip website is yet another illustration of Melbourne's uncoordinated and ineffective public transport.

Victrip is supposed to allow passengers to easily obtain bus, train and tram timetables via the internet. Instead passenger dissatisfaction with Victrip is rife, with users reporting that Victrip fails to provide basic information.

The typical passenger identifies a bus route by its number or destination, not by the name of the company that runs the bus. Yet Victrip requires travellers to know the bus company name before they can look up bus timetables. This makes Victrip useless for bus travellers, for whom timetable information is essential due to the poor frequency and limited operating hours of most routes.

Other Victrip faults include a failure to list tram route numbers, lack of suburb information, the requirement to know postcodes in order to locate Metcard outlets, and a 'trip planner' that cannot handle journeys involving transfers.

A properly designed Victrip

should fill an important need for an integrated public transport website that cannot be met through individual train, tram and bus company sites. Instead, Victrip is an embarrassment. People are entitled to ask "Who is Victrip Pty Ltd, and why are we paying them?"

Disappointment with Victrip got so serious that Meltrip, an unofficial rival to Victrip, went online last December. Meltrip users can look up timetables by bus and tram route number, see all train, tram and bus services operating in their area, and access Melway maps by suburb. Meltrip's URL is <http://www.meltrip.cjb.net>

Good though Meltrip is, Melburnians should not have to rely on a hobbyist website for basic public transport information. Instead Victrip should be upgraded to Meltrip's standard immediately. Subsequent improvements should bring it into line with best practice as demonstrated by Perth's Transperth website. Only then will Victrip meet passenger information needs and effectively promote public transport use.

## LETTERS TO THE PTUA

### Ticketing hassles

I am writing to let you know about my experiences with public transport ticketing recently. I travel daily to and from Chelsea station to Parliament. I usually buy a monthly ticket (full fare) but with the recent price increases I decided to buy a Baysider ticket. I went to purchase a Baysider ticket and was told that I couldn't because there were no application forms available. So I had to buy a daily ticket - as I decided that some time during the week surely I could get the Baysider. I went to Chelsea station and the machine took my \$1 coin, then my \$2 coin but the next \$2 coin would not go anywhere and so jammed at the entrance of the slot - however I couldn't get it out and of course Chelsea station is not manned so there was no one to tell either. By this time my train had arrived and so I just got on. When I told this to the guy manning the exit machines at Parliament, he just nodded and told me to get a ticket at the window. So now I'll have to call Bayside to tell them about the machine at Chelsea. THIS IS RIDICULOUS!!! And what

really annoys me most is that there is no recourse with this system. I've always paid my monthly tickets up front, for a service to be provided in the future. Yet regardless of how sloppy that future service may be, eg. trains being cancelled, running late, not having a seat for a majority of the way etc., there is just no recourse, and furthermore, no one to tell. I hope you can use your influence and consumer feedback like mine to get some people back into the transport system.

*Nina Fairlie, Edithvale*

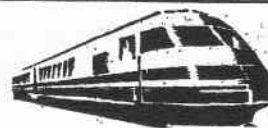
### Greenhouse gas debacle

This year is an election year at the Federal level and because of Mr Howard's lack of action, it gives us an excellent opportunity to make greenhouse gas emission levels a major election issue.

Members are asked to contact their Federal member or Senator and remind them of their duty of care to all constituents. A suggested course of action would be to spend less money on greenhouse gas generating freeways and more on environmentally friendly public transport.

*Peter Behan*

# Country Victoria



## Wodonga Town Centre to Lose Station

In a win for Wodonga real estate speculators, the Federal and State Governments have agreed to spend \$50 million on a rail bypass of Wodonga. As part of the proposal, the train station will be relocated from its convenient centre-of-town location to a new location "near the alignment of the old Hume Highway between Wodonga and Albury." This will free up the existing station site for private real estate development, at the expense of Wodonga public transport users.

It will nonetheless be some years before this relocation goes ahead, as the issue of standard-gauging the North East

and Goulburn Valley lines has yet to be resolved. On the positive side, it is believed that the new line will have a speed limit of 115kmh as compared with the present 40-80kmh, and will provide much improved freight facilities. Nonetheless, it is unclear to us how the rail alignment will avoid a sharp curve where it rejoins the old Hume Highway (supposedly the chief problem with the present line), and how passengers will benefit from the new station.

## Bairnsdale Meets Batchelor

The Bairnsdale Save Our Train Group recently met with Transport Minister Peter Batchelor to discuss the reopening of the Bairnsdale passenger service. The meeting was organised by independent

MP Craig Ingram, who has been a strong advocate for better public transport in East Gippsland. Mr Batchelor acknowledged the broad support throughout South East Victoria for the return of Bairnsdale trains, and said he would seek funding for the Bairnsdale train in the next State Budget, due to be handed down in the next month.

## Portland's call for broad gauge

Under the Kennett Government the rails between Maryborough and Portland were narrowed to connect it to the new Melbourne-Adelaide standard gauge project and the standard gauge lines coming south from NSW. The end result is that shipments from the north and north-west regions of Victoria to Melbourne have no outlet to South Australia or even the Port of Portland.

The Mayor and council of Portland want to see the Ararat to Portland line regauged to give them access to the mineral and farming products from the NW region, but there are other scenarios. Standard gauging all the lines would be the simplest but most expensive solution at \$80,000-\$100,000 a kilometre. Dual gauging the Ararat-Portland line, or building a new dual gauge line between Portland and Dennington, is a less expensive solution. These last two options would reopen the north-west of Victoria to Portland, and reopen the Mt Gambier Line to traffic from South Australia.

Total gauge standardisation in Victoria will cost about \$250 million, cheap compared to the \$960 million cost of the Scoresby Freeway alone, but it will open country Victoria to markets all over Australia as well as encourage industrial growth along those lines. It would be a bold and courageous political move on the part of the current government but the right thing to do.

## V/Line Fares Go Off The Rails

V/Line, in a move designed to avoid media scrutiny, released details of new price rises just before the Christmas break. Prices on "regulated" tickets, such as normal return tickets, rose by around 8.5% along with Melbourne Metropolitan tickets. However, the former Kennett government's contracts with the private operators did not specify that periodical tickets, such as the 6-10 week tickets used by almost all of V/Line's regular commuters, should be classified as 'regulated' tickets.

This contract conflicted with the Passengers Charter, which stated that no ticket would rise by over the rate of inflation. However, the Kennett government did not include the Passengers Charter in the contracts with National Express, thereby allowing the operator to use the contracts against their passengers.

This meant that V/Line could do anything they liked with periodical tickets, and so they put the prices up 20 per cent! Suddenly, commuters heard that their periodical tickets were "previously discounted," and now would no longer be so. This seems to be blatant exploitation of commuters: there has been no

improvement to a very inadequate service, and services are still overcrowded and unreliable.

For example, on the Geelong line (which is one of the best serviced) trains run only every hour in off-peak times, meaning that commuters can drive a car home in the time that they may spend waiting for a train. On Sundays, services are up to two hours apart (compared to 20-30 minutes on most metropolitan train lines.)

A full-fare monthly ticket servicing Melbourne's Zone 1, 2 and 3 and allowing rides on any public transport within the entire metropolitan area, costs around \$153. The cost of 4 weeks of travel on a (minimum 10 weekly) periodical ticket, allowing trips only between Geelong and Melbourne, and not including any Geelong bus trips or Melbourne public transport, costs \$204.

The Bracks government seems to have completely ignored V/Line commuters when it "managed to rein in the private operators" on 'unregulated' Met tickets early in the new year. Meanwhile V/Line commuters are still enduring overcrowded trains with no new rolling stock due until 2003.

# Reading between the whines

By Alan Ramsey (Reproduced from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17/2/01)

**F**IVE of Australia's six States are now Labor again. One of these returns today from what should have been the political dead to reaffirm its electoral legitimacy, thanks to the skill of its outrageous leader. Against this background, the politics of a cock-up explains, in part, why John Howard can't take a trick lately. The story is about that supposed \$2.9 billion in petrol excise that went "missing" from a special fund for the nation's roads. It surfaced eight days ago. It lasted just 48 hours. Before it disappeared, replaced by the frenzy of Labor's win on the back of One Nation preferences in the west, it humiliated the Prime Minister and his Deputy Prime Minister and sent the Government's support plunging in two weekend opinion polls. By Monday the story was gone, subsumed by Hanson hysteria.

Yet no money ever went missing, spirited out of the road fund by deceitful politicians. All that went missing was the competence of a Government that sat on a parliamentary report, in October 1997, for 2½ years before agreeing, 10 months ago, to fix the very matter that created the illusion of the "lost" \$2.9 billion. But, foolishly, for the next 10 months, from April last year, the Government continued to ignore its own decision.

That allowed the Auditor-General, Pat Barrett, to find what he reported last Thursday to the Parliament was a legislative requirement which the Keating Government and the Howard Government had ignored since 1993-94. Because they'd done so, Barrett wrote, the Audit Office "estimated" that the petrol excise revenue that should have gone into the special road fund from motorists' pockets over the subsequent seven years "would be some \$2.9 billion greater than that acknowledged" by the Department of Transport.

Barrett's report was tabled in Parliament and released to the press gallery. But only two newspapers picked up the story of the "missing" \$2.9 billion after each was tipped off by a phone call. The detail, buried in an accounting report of otherwise staggering disinterest and complexity, was missed by everyone else. That included the Prime Minister's Office and the National Party leader and Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson, somebody everyone thinks is a nice bloke but who, on his record, is a befuddled and accident-prone Transport Minister who has no business being in politics.

The upshot? Howard was grossly under-briefed when he went on one of his beloved radio talkback programs the morning the story

appeared in the two papers, the *Herald* and *The Australian*. Thus his host, Melbourne's Neil Mitchell, made Howard look a complete dill. Howard blustered and flustered and potted Anderson who in turn contradicted Howard. Nobody had forewarned anybody apparently, even though two journalists had phoned Anderson's office the night before for comment.

By Sunday, interviewed by Laurie Oakes on Nine's *Sunday* program, Howard had got his answers into some sort of order, however lame they still sounded. Among these: "I'm not going to be driven, you know, and told by headlines something that is not correct. I mean, look, there was advice given – or the decision taken, I'm sorry – by the Department [of Transport] during the Keating years – which, incidentally, was never communicated to the incoming government – to allow to fall into disuse a particular accounting way of handling road funding."

The previous Friday, with Mitchell, Howard blamed what had happened on "a failure to comply technically with the requirement of" the relevant 1988 legislation. In truth, he had little real idea what he was talking about. Two days later, hounded by the charge the Government had behaved illegally, Howard was blaming anonymous bureaucrats and insisting the mix-up was due to a misunderstanding of a disused accounting method.

And Anderson?

He made a lot of noise about sacking two senior members of his staff, including his chief of staff, for having been as ignorant about the Auditor-General's report as Anderson had been. In reality, the two staff members went to Anderson and fell on their swords. They told him to sack them as political damage control, just as Howard did in 1997 when he "sacked" his friend and political adviser, Grahame Morris, over the fiasco that saw the dismissal of two ministers, John Sharp and David Jull, for covering up Sharp's difficulties with over-payments of travel and accommodation expenses.

And by Tuesday of this week, Anderson was still telling 2GB's Philip Clark about the Auditor-General's report: "No, the Treasurer didn't know, neither did the Finance Minister, the Prime Minister didn't know, and I didn't know because of a very serious failure in my office. . . . This has been a massive beat-up, but unfortunately it's very late in the piece." No, not a beat-up, really, but certainly a cock-up. For a government that pretends, above all, to be efficient, too often too many incompetents lamely suggest they just "didn't know".

Well, when you go back into the history, certainly the Government should have known, nobody more so than Anderson. In August 1996, when Sharp was still transport minister,

he directed the House of Representatives committee on communications, transport and micro-economic reform to review Federal road funding. The committee's 14 members included five Labor MPs, among them a former treasurer, Ralph Willis, and two Beazley frontbenchers, Lindsay Tanner and Anthony Albanese.

The committee's inquiry lasted 14 months. It got 845 submissions and held public hearings in every State and territory with 169 witnesses. Its 183-page report, entitled "Planning Not Patching", was tabled in Parliament in October, 1997. By then, Sharp had gone and Anderson was Transport Minister. And among the report's 34 recommendations were two – 19 and 22 – that urged the Government to repeal those sections of the relevant legislation, the Australian Land Transport Development Act 1988, it said were either superseded, spurious or had fallen into disuse since 1993 and which set out the "hypothecation provisions" linking petrol excise to road funding.

The Government did nothing with the report until April last year, 30 months later. Then, in a response tabled in Parliament, it said blandly of recommendations 19 and 22: "Agreed in principle and will be addressed when amendments to the act are next considered, with timing to be subject to the Government's legislative program." Nothing has happened since. Thus, the Government has had three years and four months to do something positive about a review of Federal road funding it asked for and has since simply ignored.

Until, that is, the Auditor-General put his interpretation on the "hypothecation provisions" of the Australian Land Transport Development Act 1988 and dropped his little bomb in the Parliament nine days ago. But the Government knew – or should have known – because of the parliamentary report more than three years ago. And the Opposition knew, too, because it had been part of the committee of inquiry and had endorsed the recommendations unanimously.

Yet Labor was as shrill in condemning the Government for matters it knew – or should have known – were grossly overblown, as the Government was ignorant of matters that senior ministers well knew about – or should have known about – as long ago as October, 1997. And why did Labor get so sanctimonious in exploiting the Government's carelessness and/or incompetence?

Because the issue embraces petrol pricing and petrol taxing, and no issue more galvanises Kim Beazley's troops these days. It's obvious why. Petrol and diesel excises last Budget year (1999-2000) raised \$13.7 billion in Federal revenue. This is almost double the revenue from eight years earlier, in 1991-92, of



\$7.1 billion. It is the Commonwealth's fastest growing tax as well as politically, with the average voter, its most sensitive.

Yet in all the scapegoating, scare-mongering and sanctimonious breast-beating that went on all week, lost in the noise was the simple fact that \$2.9 billion has never gone missing at any stage from Federal road funds, despite the Prime Minister's immediate resort to blather in his ignorance of the Auditor-General's report. The parliamentary committee that spent so much time (and money) in its 14-month inquiry would have made that clear to anyone who read its report with care and fair-mindedness three years ago.

One group actually acknowledged that this week. On Monday, with the political media's short-lived attention already gripped by the defeat of the Court Government in the west, few even read the statement released by the Public Transport Users Association. Its president, Paul Mees, a lecturer in transport planning at Melbourne University, responded vigorously to the hysteria:

"... The fund under the Australian Land Transport Development Act is an historical relic that should have been abolished years ago. Transport Minister Anderson, and his predecessors, deserve criticism for failing to attend to this, but it does not follow the

Commonwealth has under-spent on roads by even one cent. A bipartisan parliamentary committee unanimously recommended in 1997 the fund be abolished because it no longer reflected the true basis on which Federal road funding is allocated. All the Labor members supported the recommendation, and not a peep of protest was heard from the road lobby at the time.

"The non-abolition of the fund was nothing more than a bookkeeping error. It is scandalously dishonest to suggest [differently]. The road lobby has been telling lies for years about national funding as part of a sleazy campaign for road funds ahead of more urgent priorities like health, education and defence. This is just the latest misrepresentation."

And, in an election year, not only by the road lobbyists.



**Copy Deadline for the next PTUA News is 11 May**

Newsletter Production Team:

Hayden Jones, Tony Morton, Dominic McMullan, Peter Parker and Thom Lyons

Printed on recycled paper by Flash Print, Collingwood

Our thanks to the dedicated mailout team

# PTUA News

Newsletter of the Public Transport Users' Association, Org. No. A-6256L

Print Post: Publication No. PP 331088/00009

If undeliverable, return to:

PTUA Office, Second Floor, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000

**SURFACE  
MAIL**

**POSTAGE  
PAID  
AUSTRALIA**

## *A Warm Welcome to All Our New Members*

### **Do the Eastern Suburbs Need More Freeways?**

**A public debate to uncover all the facts**

**When:** 7:30 pm Tuesday 10 April

**Where:** Karalika Theatre, Mines Rd, Ringwood East.  
(Melway 50 A6)

**Speakers:**

**Dr Ken Ogden**, Group Manager Public Policy, RACV

**Dr Paul Mees**, Lecturer in Planning, Melbourne University and President, PTUA

**Mr Ben Smith**, Public Transport Campaigner, Environment Victoria

**Cr Kevin Walsh**, Chairperson, Eastern Ring Road Steering Committee

**Sponsored by** Croydon Conservation Society, Koonung Mullum Forestway Association, PTUA, Environment Victoria, Blackburn Free Press, Knox City Conservation Society and P.R.A.I.S.E.

#### **Changed your address?**

Make sure your PTUA News follows you when you move!

Cut out or photocopy this form, fill in and return to us at PTUA, Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

New address \_\_\_\_\_

Town / Suburb \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (M) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Responsibility for electoral comment in PTUA News is taken by Vaughan Williams, 247 Flinders Lane Melbourne.