

YarraBUG submission to Councillors

We are writing to support the sustainable transport proposal moved by Councillor Maltzahn at the Council meeting of 8 February. We are a non-aligned group and don't support any particular party – we just want to get the best deal we can for cyclists.

As we are a group which lobbies for better conditions for cyclists, obviously we support the proposal to encourage more people to cycle! We reiterate the ongoing need to maintain and develop bicycle facilities. However, we also support plans to reduce car dependence and to improve public transport in the City.

On the issue of public transport, train travel is a natural partner to cycling. It's useful if you need to make a long journey, if the weather goes bad or if you or your bike have a breakdown. On the issue of car-dependence, we will benefit (along with everyone else) from the improvement in air quality which will result. We share the road with cars, and we don't appreciate breathing the exhaust gases they produce! You may have heard of the European study (Kunzli et al, 2000) which showed that traffic-related air pollution kills more people than do car accidents.

As much of the traffic in Yarra is coming from areas outside the City, co-operation with other Councils will be essential. It may be too late to stop the Mitcham-Frankston freeway; however, the BUG supports the proposed anti-freeway coalition with other Councils.

Australia has been largely self-sufficient in oil, thanks to our deposits in Bass Strait and off NW Australia. However, predictions by Woodside and the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association (Akehurst 2002, APPEA 2002) indicate that Australia is becoming increasingly vulnerable to serious oil shortages. Urban transport is the most profligate oil consumption area where conservation measures will be easily and quickly possible, to reduce the competition for scarce oil supplies in industries without adequate alternatives (Robinson, 2002). The looming oil shortage is a powerful argument in favour of more sustainable transport. We need to plan now for a less oil-dependent transport system, rather than having change forced on us in a few years.

In Yarra, we already have more conditions favouring sustainable transport than exist in most other Council areas:

- Since our city was laid out in an age when cars did not exist, it is more “walkable” than are newer suburbs designed with car travel in mind;
- We have much better public transport than most other suburbs do;
- As you would know, more people in Yarra cycle to work than in any other Melbourne municipality.

As with any big social change, it may be difficult to believe that a transport mode change is really achievable. However, community attitudes and behaviour **do** change over time – for example, consider the change in attitudes to smoking which has occurred in Australia in recent years.

The BUG urges you to support the proposal for sustainable transport in the City. Please don't be defeatist ("we'll never beat the oil lobby"). Make things happen, rather than simply drifting along – be pro-active!

References

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http://www.appea.com.au/whats_happening/A%20CRUDE%20OIL%20DEVELOPMENT%20STRATEGY%20FOR%20AUSTRALIA.pdf

Kunzli, N., Kaiser, R. et al., "**Public-health Impact of Outdoor and Traffic-Related Air Pollution:** a European Assessment," *The Lancet*, Vol. 356, September 2, 2000.

Robinson B, **Global Oil Vulnerability and the Australian Situation.** A background paper for WA State Sustainability Strategy, 30th June 2002