

The Energy Action Group a Victorian Incorporated Association representing the interests of residential and small business energy users wishes to strongly support the People for Ecologically Sustainable Transport Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Progress in Rail Reform.

The EAG has been particularly impressed with the way in PEST has been able to demonstrate the significant changes in transportation patterns. The changes in travel patterns and the increasing dependence on car based transport has significant consequences for the Australian economy.

At the macro economic level there is the increasing dependence on liquid fuel imports and their effect on the Balance of Payments. Little or no work has been carried out on the congestion effects of increasing car ownership. Unfortunately congestion effects can be seen as a plus with increased consumption and the remedial actions to address this problem all adding to conventional economic growth. The diseconomies are still forming the basis of the arguments submissions and funding decisions to increase road infrastructure at the expense of the transport alternatives.

It is clear that a highly efficient rail based public transport system provides a critical but equitable form of transport for Australian cities. The failure by successive state and federal governments to fund public transport has downgraded the role of rail based transport.

The PEST submission continues the process of raising access and equity issues relating to transport by a very small number of transport researchers. As Australian cities continue with low density urban expansion, the failure by Governments to provide frequent, fast, reliable rail based public transport adds to the pressure for low income households to invest in cars.

Unfortunately for low income households this investment comes at a price in both household and societal terms. In household terms a car may provide some liberation and independence for the individual or the family, but the device has the potential adsorb a high percentage of household disposable income. One societal downside is that a significant level of old car ownership adds to the number of gas guzzlers in the fuel fleet and the contribution of automotive emissions that affect the levels of pollution Australian cities. Any attempt to change car fuel fleet efficiency and reduce car emissions needs to take into account the effects on low income households.

The PEST submission offers an attractive alternative to increased car ownership. It also points to a significant direction that transport research, policy development and action needs to address in Australia.

The PEST submission recognises that changes in transport policy direction takes time. It demonstrates that the US, Swiss, Danish, Japanese and Dutch governments have in place policies that attempt to promote integrated transport resource and environmental policies Something that has been forgotten in the Australian political scene.

The PEST submission raises significant issues in relation to equity that need to be researched and policies developed to address the problems on reducing resource depletion, inappropriate investment, congestion issues and the reduction emissions in an integrated manner. Given the pitiful level of resources available to PEST to make their submission

The PEST submission provides a strong direction that should the Productivity Commission (you) follow the logic in the submission and then makes the appropriate recommendations to the Federal Government in your report. This Inquiry process will be worth while as it will help fuel the integrated policy directions needed to carry Australia into the 21st century

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