

6 June 2007 COUNCIL

The area of roads is something that hits home to each and every one of us. Victoria is the state of congestion. That should be on our numberplates. Forget 'The place to be', make it 'Victoria -- state of congestion'. What we need is a vehicular decongestant, and that is not easy to say. We will not get one until such time as we get a government that actually cares about motorists. We all know that the Labor Party in this state, and probably not just in this state but across Australia, has a long history of total disinterest in cars, car travel and roads. I am glad Mr Guy mentioned -- he reminded me of it -- that when John Cain was Premier of the state he instructed his chauffeur to avoid travelling on freeways whenever possible. I do not know how much time was

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wasted by Mr Cain doing that, although given what he did at the office it was probably a good thing that he was in the car for as long as possible.

However, the reality is that in this state at the moment it is impossible to go anywhere in a reasonable time anywhere near peak hour. Peak hour used to be from about 4.30 p.m. until about 6.00 p.m.; now it starts at about 3 o'clock and ends up about 7.30 p.m., and it is getting worse. In the two years prior to my election to this place I was travelling from the outer west to the outer east every day. When I first began doing that in 2004 it took me 1 1/4 hours to get there. Two years later travelling the same route took me close to 2 hours. That is something that is replicated by thousands of people every day.

When one considers the amount of petrol -- and I hope my Greens friends are listening to this -- that is wasted by people stuck in traffic jams on a daily basis, morning and night, one has to say that that must contribute enormously to climate change and must create an enormous number of black balloons. That is something the government should have a good hard think about if its rhetoric is in any way, shape or form fair dinkum, and I am far from convinced that it is.

When one looks at peak hour in this city, whether it be the western suburbs, the northern suburbs, the east or the south, there are more red lights than Amsterdam. It is just not good enough. As far as the eye can see all that is on display are red lights. This is going on on a daily basis, both morning and night. One should consider what Victorians should and could be doing if they were not stuck behind the wheels of their cars in traffic jams.

Ms Hartland -- Catch a train.

Mr [FINN](#) -- I will get to that in a minute too, because, as Ms Hartland has mentioned previously, that is something which has become increasingly hard to do with the overcrowding on the train network.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr [FINN](#) -- How did you get on? Did they push you on Japanese style?

I hope Mr Pakula is listening to this because I know the western suburbs are not an area he is familiar with, although I understand he has been there a couple of times this year, which is a giant step in the right direction. However, the western suburbs comprise the fastest growing region of Melbourne. They are literally growing like the clappers.

I am sorry that Mr Madden has left the chamber because he will get up and he will trumpet that he has allowed another estate to be opened in the western suburbs, bringing in thousands more people, but where is the infrastructure? It does not exist.

Mr Guy -- What are they going to live in?

Mr [FINN](#) -- As Mr Guy points out -- he is on his mettle today -- the Minister for Planning, Mr Madden, will talk about McMansions. He will criticise what people live in. He will tell them what they should live in. He will try to dictate the lifestyle that they should live, but will he or his government provide the infrastructure for a decent life? Will they provide, for example, more roads in the western suburbs? Will they provide more bus services in the areas that do not have them?

Mr Guy -- The South Morang railway.

Mr [FINN](#) -- It is not in the west, but it is pretty close. What the people of the western suburbs need and want more than anything else from this government is decent infrastructure to supplement their lifestyles and allow them to live a decent and proper life as they desire.

I turn to the area of overcrowding on trains, to which Ms Hartland referred. We do need more trains, and I do not think there is any doubt about that at all. The government has recently announced that it is going to do a bit of a slap-up job on the North Melbourne station. It is going to give it an escalator and a coat of paint. That is just sensational! However, it does not in any way, shape or form help commuters in that area.

North Melbourne station services trains on the Werribee, Newport, Williamstown, Broadmeadows, Upfield and Watergardens metropolitan lines and the Geelong, Warrnambool, Sunbury, Bendigo, Craigieburn and Kilmore lines in the country. We have an enormous number of trains coming through North Melbourne station. They just cannot all fit through.

As the population continues to explode at an extraordinary rate, more trains are needed. If the trains are put there, they will not be able to get through the stations, so obviously there will not be enough trains. Can I suggest to the government that if it is talking about infrastructure, an escalator and a coat of paint are not good enough. We need to look at this seriously and come up with solutions which are going to provide for the people who use public transport in the west of Melbourne and indeed in the north of Melbourne, as Mr Guy so correctly pointed out.

As I alluded to, the roads situation is just absolutely horrific. The West Gate Freeway was once something we all held up as something to be proud of. In fact I

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recall when working at the late-lamented radio station, 3DB, in the 1980s, that the West Gate Bridge was the 'gateway to tomorrow'. That is the way it was promoted. Right now it is the gateway to nowhere, because if you get on the West Gate Freeway, it is really a gamble as to how long you will stay on it and whether you will get off it, because this thing usually gets blocked up at about 6.30 a.m. and might unblock itself by 10.00 a.m. if we are lucky, but the rest of the time it is just an unmitigated disaster. I have seen the West Gate Freeway blocked back to Werribee.

It does not affect just the people of the western suburbs in a huge way, it affects the people of Geelong. There is a huge commuting population in Geelong. It affects hundreds of thousands of people. We desperately need a second Yarra crossing where the West Gate Bridge is. The West Gate Bridge itself, I am told, is coming to the end of its useful time. That in itself is a big worry. What is the government doing about that? Absolutely nothing.

Mr Guy -- Surprising.

Mr [FINN](#) -- A surprise indeed! The same as it does about everything else, the government is doing absolutely nothing. Those opposite are comatose. They are sitting back there having a snooze. I am not sure what they are dreaming about, but I hope they are having pleasant dreams, because the rest of us are having nightmares thanks to the inaction, the dozing, of this government that just will not act, that will not get up to support the people of this state and in particular the people of the western suburbs of Melbourne.

Rail freight is another issue where the Labor Party has let down the people of the west. There is now no rail freight from the port of Melbourne to the west of Melbourne as a result of the inaction of this government. The only company that provided that pulled up stumps earlier this year because, as its representatives said to me, it had just had enough of the Bracks government.

The company had been talking to the government for years, and what had it got? It got exactly what everybody else gets from the government -- absolutely nothing.

Hon. T. C. Theophanous -- You're making it up!

Mr [FINN](#) -- If Mr Theophanous thinks I am making it up, I am very happy to take him out to Altona -- I will take him because he will not be able to get there himself -- and sit him down with the people responsible, the people who have put millions and millions of dollars into that project but have had to pull out just a few months ago. After eight years is it not time that the Bracks government realised that it is in government? Is it not time it realised that what happened before happened before, but now it has responsibility for what happens in the state?

It has responsibility for water and electricity and roads and public transport and all those other areas -- all those things that it does not want to know about? Is it not time that it took some responsibility for being in government? It has been sleeping far too long. I respectfully suggest that it is time that this government might like to activate itself a little bit. It might like to get out and talk to real people with real problems.

I would welcome any member coming with me out to the western suburbs to talk to the people in Footscray, to talk to the people in Sunshine, to talk to the people in Keilor or Werribee or Altona or any of the places so badly affected by a government that just does not care, to get out and talk to these people, find out what the problems are and find solutions. These are problems that are affecting people enormously on a daily basis. It is not good enough for the Labor Party to sit back, accept the cars and all the perks of office and do nothing for it. It is almost fraud.

This government has been and is asleep at the wheel. It is about time it woke up.