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Chris Harris

Campaign Coordinator, Australian Greens.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WE WELCOME YOUR RESPONSES TO ARTICLES AND IDEAS EXPRESSED IN GREEN MAGAZINE.
PLEASE EMAIL US GREENMAG@GREENS.ORG.AU - WE PUBLISH WHAT WE CAN FIT ON THIS PAGE!

RESPONSES TO 'DOES THE PLANET NEED CHRISTIAN STEWARDS?'

(ISSUE 37: September 2012)

I was greatly impressed by the article written by Dr Vicky Balabanski in which she explores the entwining of Christian principles with sustainable ecological principles. Christianity is indeed one of the three major religions in the world. Bringing such values to the forefront of such a dominant faith, will undoubtedly help to change the practices of many people globally, and therefore help to create more sustainable ways of being.

However, one must not be dismissive of Eastern philosophies that revere nature as the very embodiment of God. Their religious practices prior to colonisation and globalisation meant that they lived in sustainable ways, and still do, as in remote parts of North India and other parts of Asia, unless of course their ways of being are threatened by outside influences.

Caring for the Earth is a global commitment. Indigenous people of multiple faiths and religious persuasions, in diverse continents such as South America and Africa, are risking their very lives in order for this to happen. One can not therefore assign a single religion or single religious institution to oversee this. It has to be a multi-faith approach where all views are equally embraced for a greater truth: the creation of a sustainable future, not only for human beings worldwide, but also other creatures, through conservation and sustainable practices.

Moreover, it requires us to treat the planet as a living being: Mother Earth or Bhoomi Devi as she is referred to by Hindus worldwide, not exploit it for our selfish purposes. It requires us to give thanks to what has been given so freely, and give back more in return through gratitude.

CHANDRICKA S KAMALANATHAN
KINGS LANGLEY, NSW

For the first time in many years of receiving the Greens magazine I have felt compelled to write as a response to your article "Does the planet need christian stewards?"

The author of this article explains how the christian bible encourages human-kind to subdue and have dominion over

all other species, and acknowledges that this message has been used for centuries to justify exploitation and destruction of other species and the delicate web of life on this planet. Remarkably, she then goes on to state that the very bronze age philosophy that caused this righteous destruction is the very tool we need to set things right.

I would argue that only a fool would seek to divert a crisis by employing the exact same set of values which caused the crisis in the first place. In order to appreciate and respect the finely tuned ecology of this planet, we must turn to science rather than myth. Science opens our eyes to the elegance and interconnectedness of reality, demonstrating with beauty and clarity that human beings are not the pinnacle of evolution and that we do not have a mandate to dominate and subdue other species in accordance with the values of a bronze-age myth. I am both surprised and deeply disappointed that this article should appear in a Greens magazine. The religious have contested science for centuries and we can see the results, particularly in modern day America, where christian myth reigns supreme while science is denied.

Rather than further retreating into fantasy, it is time to accept reality, and look to testable scientific evidence. Only through evidence based knowledge can we hope to finally accept our place, not as children of the gods, but as responsible and humble stewards of this planet.

AMANDA MEADOWS
MARGATE

RESPONSE TO 'OUR BORDERS ARE SECURE...'

(ISSUE 37: September 2012)

Giovanni Torre's article on our treatment of asylum seekers leaves little more to be said as it was a clear exposition of Greens policy and a basic criticism of the bipartisan policy of the ALP and the opposition coalition.

What still needs to be said is that the term 'border protection' is a euphemism that should be exposed as a cover for a prejudice against people whose skin is darker than those of us of European extraction and who profess a religion other than Christianity.

The real problem is not the number of refugees who want to come to Australia but that so many of them are drowned before they get here. There is no point in blaming the people smugglers who are the only hope of those who are so desperate to get here that they are willing to pay large amounts of money in the knowledge that they will be risking their lives in unseaworthy boats.

For those who do manage to arrive in Australia, the government has plans to fly them to Manus Island or Nauru. I don't see how this is going to solve any problems or save any money. Surely it would be cheaper and certainly safer to fly them to Australia from Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Africa, Afghanistan or anywhere else. They could be expected to pay for their passage on a chartered flight or even be transported by the RAAF.

This would require a greater effort at diplomacy to achieve cooperation by other countries, but in the long run would result in a more humane treatment of refugees and a corresponding enhancement of our reputation.

If we like to think of ourselves as being a Christian country, it's surprising how many of us seem to have forgotten the parable of the Good Samaritan.

IAN EDWARDS
INNER SYDNEY GREENS

A WASTE OF PAPER

Dear Greens, I love your work. Great organisation, great people. My only gripe is the amount of advertising material I get in the mail wanting me to donate. I understand that this organisation is supported by donations, but what I don't understand is that for a party that advocates Green environmental issues, why do we generate so much potential paper waste?

What I would like to see in the future is several questions asked:

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- Keep up the good fight.

PAUL SMART

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EDITORIAL

TRANSPORTING YOU INTO ANOTHER ISSUE OF GREEN

Green

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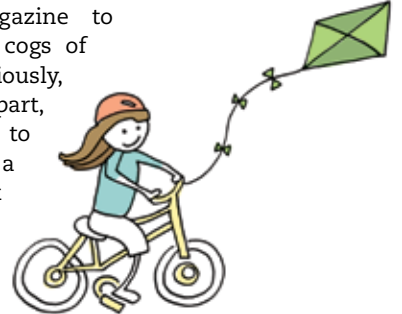
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The Australian Greens wish to acknowledge that we are on indigenous ground – this land is the spiritual and sacred place of the traditional owners and their ancestors and continues to be a place of significance. Further, we thank them for sharing this land with us and agree to respect their laws and lores.



We couldn't get this magazine to you without the intricate cogs of transport that spin furiously, almost out of sight and, for the most part, out of mind. A tram ride into the city to take a photo for a member profile, a quick bike ride to the printers to check the proof, a leisurely flight to scatter 10,000 copies across the country, and a postie's motorbike to deliver it to your letterbox.



It's a delicate dance that is easy to take for granted; the getting of things from A to B. But from all the articles we have published in this issue about transport, one message seems to be common to all of them – we can't keep doing things the way we have been. Whether it's the false economy of urban sprawl that locks people into low transport options and high costs, the motorway fixation of state and federal governments, or the obsession with short term profits of transport privatisation; it's clear that there has to be more sustainable or innovative ways to meet our transport needs.

Promisingly perhaps, many of the articles in this issue talk about solutions as being a matter of will rather than ideas. High speed rail networks, apps that facilitate shared travel, and bicycle-car hybrid vehicles all offer a glimpse of different ways of moving ourselves around this world. Of course some of these ideas take a significant shift in thinking, not just for us but for the broader community and all levels of government. But as Senator Ludlam states in one of our articles in this issue, "if we want the things we hold most precious to stay the same, we're going to need to change".

Sit back and enjoy this issue, and don't forget to pass it on to someone else to read once you're finished.

Catherine Green
Editor

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MORE THAN ALTERNATIVE FUELS NEEDED TO KEEP US MOVING

PHIL HART ARGUES THAT ELECTRIC CARS WON'T ACHIEVE MUCH PER SE. WE NEED TO DRIVE/CYCLE HYBRID VEHICLES LIKE ELECTRIC BIKES AND THE TREV OR ENGAGE IN HIGH-TECH HITCHING

How absurd is the car? For most of our journeys, we travel alone but carry with us the best part of two tonnes of steel, glass and plastic. Then when we get to our destination our freedom machine occupies well over 10 square metres of concrete or asphalt the whole time we spend there. Occasionally we even get to occupy that space for free, most other times it's dirt cheap (really), and we might leave it there all day. How crazy is that?

So what do we need to do?

WALKING AND CYCLING

We need a lot more of this for a lot of very different reasons. (Elliot Fishman has more to say about this on page 10).

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Certainly we need lots of this and we should invest our scarce and valuable government funds in public transport rather than roads. Buses, trains, trams, the works. But we can't easily change the sprawl or poor design of our cities and building new public transport infrastructure is expensive and rather time consuming. We need to do the best we can but this is only one part of the solution.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

If you accept that sustainability means we need to be as efficient as possible with energy and resources, then a two tonne Chevrolet Volt (or locally the Holden Ampera) powered not by gasoline but by electrical energy stored in the batteries does not really achieve a whole lot for us, other than reducing an individual's reliance on oil (an admirable and necessary goal, but not one to focus on to the exclusion of all else). Electric

vehicles facilitate a move to transport powered by renewably generated electricity, smart grids and all, but we need to rethink how big an electric vehicle really needs to be.

SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

The simplest answer to the ideal car is that it be as small as possible for the task at hand as size and weight are the biggest drivers of energy consumption. At the moment we buy a big heavy car that can handle the toughest task we ever need it for, even if we only take all the kids and the caravan out for a road trip once a year. Perhaps we need to share the big vehicle with the neighbours for those occasions, and downsize for the daily commute?

I also predict there will be a blurring of the lines between bikes and cars. What do you call an electric bike with three wheels and a protective cage to protect you from the weather? TREV, the two-seater renewable energy electric vehicle pioneered in South Australia, might fit two people and some luggage but is it really a car at all? How we safely allocate road space to such a wide spectrum of 'vehicles' will be a new challenge.

BIOFUELS

If we turned all of the world's food into fuel, it would replace just 20% of the world's oil supply. And we would have 7 billion very hungry people. (<http://www.theoil Drum.com/node/2431>). Can we really afford to sacrifice any significant amount of land for a tiny amount of fuel? Oil really is amazing stuff (it's no surprise we got addicted to it) and it's hard work when you try to make it yourself. It does make sense for Australia to support whatever biofuel production

we can achieve from sustainable waste products such as sugar cane bagasse. But we're a big country with not many people so it makes no sense for us to be importing biofuels from other countries when that adds to global demand for a resource even more scarce than oil, and frequently more environmentally damaging as well. So let's start by banning biofuel imports and just do what we can at home where we can keep a close eye on how it is done.

'Next generation' biofuels are repeatedly struggling to match marketing hype and performance in the lab with real world results when applied at large scale. But the simple fact is we can't afford to allocate good agricultural land to fuel for our cars. And marginal land is called that for a reason. There may be some biofuel crops that can be grown on such land, and perhaps even make a commercial return, but they will not make for cheap and abundant fuel.

NATURAL GAS AND COAL-TO-LIQUIDS

Australia has a lot of gas and a lot of coal. If our sole interest was in reducing our reliance on oil imports, we could do more with liquefied natural gas (for heavy vehicles like trucks and buses) and coal-to-liquids. The latter is particularly intensive from an emissions point-of-view. With so much energy sacrificed in the conversion of coal-to-liquids, there is even less net energy available for carbon dioxide sequestration, itself an energy intensive process with many of its own daunting challenges. Thankfully, building a coal-to-liquids plant is hideously expensive (even by oil and gas industry standards) so the market, left to its own devices, is not likely to produce many.

AVOID AND REDUCE

Driving the kids all over town for school and football seems normal today, or living on one side of town and working on the other. But such extravagant use of energy might not always come so cheap. Perhaps

if we invested in our local school and community we wouldn't feel the need to look further afield?

SHARING RIDES WITH YOUR SMARTPHONE

Let's face it, car-pooling is not cool. There's a cultural stigma against sharing a ride with a stranger, and even car-pooling with office colleagues is not flexible or convenient enough for it to have taken off.

But picture yourself standing beside a busy road, knowing that every few minutes somebody will pass by that is going where you need to be. What if your smart phone could connect the two of you, handle payment of a fee for the ride and make sure that you're only being paired with somebody who has been rated highly by others?

"If we turned all of the world's food into fuel, it would replace just 20% of the world's oil supply. And we would have 7 billion very hungry people."

This requires no new infrastructure or significant expenditure, just enough people downloading and using a new app. It could increase the occupancy of cars on the road, reduce traffic and congestion and even replace some public transport services.

High-tech hitchhiking (www.theoilrum.com/node/4406) could be revolutionary, but only if we want it to be. The barriers are social and cultural, rather than technical or related to lack of funding.

The same is true for many of the transport changes we need to make. ▲

Phil Hart is an engineer who has previously worked in the oil industry but now looks after an equally valuable liquid in the water industry. He is passionate about the new engineering infrastructure and cultural and behavioural changes we need to support sustainable energy and transport for the future.

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To reduce carbon, we have to sell the green wellbeing message

BY ROBERT SALTER

“Okay, maybe we should be reducing carbon emissions. But it’ll cost us. Higher prices, more taxes, extra regulations, inconvenience, things we can’t do any more. And Australian business will be less competitive too.”

That seems to be the attitude of a great many Australians on the question of reducing our carbon footprint – and they’re just the ones who support taking action. How we view a low carbon future is extremely important, because we humans tend to put off necessary actions if we expect them to be unpleasant.

But here’s the thing. A growing body of evidence shows that, overall policies and practices that lower carbon can actually enhance our wellbeing rather than diminishing it – even before we factor in the wellbeing benefits of a better climate. These policies and practices can make us healthier, increase our quality of life, and save us money. They can give us more time with family and friends, make our localities more attractive and improve business productivity.

So it’s important for people to know that they can live a great life that is also a low carbon life. But two further factors make this even more important. One is that the adverse consequences of climate change are seen to be so far in the future that they simply don’t compete with more ‘urgent’ imperatives, even though our actions right now will lock in climatic consequences for centuries to come. The other is that those with small carbon footprints won’t fare any better (in terms of climatic benefits) than those with large carbon footprints. In fact, the latter are likely to be better off because a large carbon footprint probably means they’re affluent and thus better able to shield themselves from climate change consequences.

These factors lead to procrastination and buck-passing: ‘we need to fix the economy first’, ‘we’re only responsible for a tiny fraction of global emissions’, ‘the Chinese need to act first’ and so on. Thus it’s urgent to show how lowering our emissions can make us better off right now.

Moreover, getting people to believe in anthropogenic climate change is not the central task. Yes, it’s frustrating when deniers blatantly disregard the scientific consensus and cite their own shonky ‘experts’ instead, but we can overestimate the importance of this. According to one US survey, people’s views on the reality or causes of climate change have no significant effect on their carbon-related behaviour. And despite the fact that northern Europeans have a carbon footprint half or less than ours, with bipartisan support for carbon reduction policies, they have similar rates of climate change denial to our own. In one survey, only 44% of Australians thought that humans alone caused climate change, but so did only 44% of Danes, 40% of Dutch, and 48% of Swedes. But if low carbon policies are benefiting us in other ways – and these countries are up the top on quality of life indices – then what we believe about climate change becomes much less critical.

Let’s look, therefore, at some of the evidence that our wellbeing can be enhanced by lower carbon living, starting with the area of health.

The high carbon world is an unhealthy world. It’s estimated that more Australians die each year from air pollution than from road accidents through lung, heart and nervous system diseases, chiefly from traffic and fossil fuel power generation. Of course road accidents are also part of our high carbon life, as is the stress of coping with traffic congestion as a commuter or a resident. The health costs of traffic pollution are around \$3.3 billion a year, while health costs from coal-fired power generation are about \$2.6 billion. On the other hand, exercise from ‘active transport’ – walking, cycling and public transport – reduces obesity, heart and lung diseases, diabetes, breast cancer, depression, and sleep disorders.

More thermally efficient buildings lower emissions as well as increase the comfort and health of building occupants, thereby reducing premature deaths and the incidence of heart disease, asthma, other respiratory diseases and strokes. Lower energy use in



cities also lessens the ‘urban heat island’ effect and its associated health effects. Livestock are a major contributor to greenhouse emissions, but less meat consumption reduces not only these emissions but also heart disease, obesity and colorectal cancers. As well, there are health benefits (discussed below) from stronger communities, an indirect result of low carbon living. Better health means reduced health care costs, but also saves money through lower absenteeism, higher work productivity and reduced need for sickness and disability benefit payments. And despite claims of health risks from wind generators, not one of the numerous scientific studies of this has substantiated these claims.

Shifting to renewable, emissions-free power is cheaper for households, businesses and governments alike once the transition is made and economies of scale are realised, as costs from that point are mainly for maintenance of the systems. And it’s a similar story for the switch to more energy efficient appliances and technologies. Australian businesses that are slow to use or produce green technologies will increasingly find themselves at a global disadvantage as competitors reduce operational costs or take the lead in supplying new green markets.

Active transport is much more practically and financially feasible in denser localities, because the trips people need to make are shorter and public transport providers have a larger population catchment to draw passengers from (thus increasing earnings and making improved and more frequent services more financially possible). In turn greater use of active transport has been shown to further reduce the distances people travel, as over time they do more things locally, including working and shopping, and this in turn strengthens the local economy and the local community. Research indicates that users of active transport interact with neighbours more. In yet another study the health benefits of local

“It’s estimated that more Australians die each year from air pollution than from road accidents...”

connectedness are highlighted; finding that if you’re not a member of a community organisation and you join one, your chance of dying in the next year halves.

Support for sustainable transport and a compact city is increasing. In Melbourne this March quarter fewer detached houses were built than apartments, units and townhouses for the first time. Australia-wide, car sales are declining and public transport use is up as people seek a more

interesting and connected inner suburban lifestyle. It has to be done properly of course, with attractive public spaces, high quality transit and new ways to provide greenery in a compact city. In this last area exciting ideas are being generated by a movement called ‘biophilic urbanism’, as the video <http://bitly.com/bcGpCc> illustrates. These ideas include green walls and roofs, the restoration of watercourses, and swales (natural drainage lines) instead of concrete gutters. Cities like Paris, Barcelona and Vienna show how compact, transit-oriented cities can provide a high quality of life while reducing emissions.

More compact cities also mean fewer kilometres of roads, paths, and the pipes and cables required for utilities, and this saves governments, businesses and householder’s money. And societies with less car use and more transit, walking and cycling also spend less on transport in total.

There are so many ways in which a lower carbon life is a higher quality life. If we want Australians to act on climate change, this is the message we need to get across. ▲

Dr Robert Salter is a Senior Lecturer in Sustainability and Wellbeing at Curtin University Sustainability Policy (CUSP) Institute, and is currently engaged (from Melbourne) in a multi-university Cooperative Research Centre on Low Carbon Living. In a personal capacity he writes a blog on this subject, www.lowcarbonwellbeing.com.



OUR NEW REALITY REQUIRES A POLICY U-TURN

BY ELLIOT FISHMAN

Chief Urban Designer for New York City, Alexandros Washburn asks his planners to leave the city in a better condition than they found it and to consider how a place should feel when they embark on a new project.

The growing trend in a handful of cities to prioritise place over passage is responsible for dramatic improvements in urban liveability, social and environmental health, as well as a city's economic prospects. A prominent example of this trend can be seen in New York's Times Square where road space has been converted to a people-place, with deck chairs and tables. The emerging challenges of climate change, peak oil, obesity and congestion are acting as a catalyst for some cities to begin reversing the legacy of auto-dependent city planning.

As anyone who's subscribed to a federal transport minister's media releases will know, adding road volume to relieve congestion is an important political priority in Australia. This approach, of building additional road capacity in a futile attempt to reduce traffic congestion is not restricted to the federal sphere. Victorian Premier Ted Baillieu has repeatedly expressed his support for the controversial road tunnel between Melbourne's western suburbs and the Eastern Freeway. One might be forgiven for being a little taken aback at this \$9 billion toll road proposal, given the financial disaster of these schemes in recent years and the state of the global economy. Coming in the same period as the passing of the federal government's climate change legislation and world oil prices at pre-GFC highs places further questions on the fiscal and environmental credibility of major road proposals in Australian cities. The 2008 Eddington Inquiry found the benefit cost ratio for this Victorian project to be negative, meaning for every \$1 invested, less than \$1 would be returned. Given that official figures show road use flat lining in all Australian capitals (since mid-2004), world oil prices nudging triple figures, and a very poor global economic outlook it is difficult to see proposals for new road projects in our cities as

anything other than irrational exuberance for a policy mindset that has well passed its use-by date.

Tension in the Middle East, rising demand in emerging economies and serious oil supply concerns are pushing petrol prices close to the \$1.50 mark and Australian motorists are once again beginning to experience the so called "*pain at the pump*" in a manner not experienced since oil prices hit record levels in mid-2008. Geopolitical tensions are a rising threat to the global economy. The Obama Administration warned that the surging price of oil might put the brakes to an already sluggish US economy. Indeed the 1973 Arab oil embargo, the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the 1991 Gulf War all caused major jumps in the price of oil, and subsequent recessions. Unlike these previous crises, today's oil market is characterized by an inability to find what the industry term '*super giant*' oil fields to meet growing demand. In Spain, the brakes are being applied, literally, with the national speed limit being lowered to conserve fuel. A Wikileaks cable in February 2011 uncovered serious concern regarding Saudi Arabia's oil reserves. In the cable, a former Saudi oil executive told a US diplomat that the Kingdom's supply has been overstated, by as much as 40%, equating to 300 billion barrels.

These leaks add to a growing series of concerns for the future of global oil supply. Consider the following facts: oil discovery peaked in 1964. Since the mid-1960s, we have been finding less and less oil each year and this has now reached the point where we use four barrels of oil for each new one discovered. Australian oil discovery peaked in 2000 and we now import approximately 50% of our oil needs. By 2020, the Australian government estimates we will need to import 75% (most of which will come from politically unstable regions), leading to an oil trade deficit of around \$10 billion. The CSIRO forecast we could be paying up to \$8 per litre by 2018 – costing over \$450 to fill the average family car.

Australian greenhouse gas emissions from transport have risen 30% between 1990 and 2005 and

this is projected to increase to over 60% by 2020; with transport accounting for 34% of household emissions, and road building projects currently in proposal or construction promising to blow out our already high emission levels.

Political leaders need to cautiously assess the risks involved in undertaking hugely expensive, 1960s style road-building exercises that even optimistically fail to provide a return on investment. In an era of declining per capita car use, rising fuel costs, and a price on carbon, \$9 billion would be much better spent elsewhere. While there are no silver bullets to beating

“...irrational exuberance for a policy mindset that has well passed its use-by date.”

the pain at the pump and tackling climate change, some simple, practical steps could go a long way to reducing our vulnerability to high petrol costs and our surging greenhouse gas emissions.

Australia is one of the most car dependent nations on earth. According to the latest Census, cars account for some 90% of trips to work. Whilst we are a big country, many of our trips are surprisingly short. In Melbourne around 50% of car journeys are less than 5km. Many of these trips could be done by bicycle and foot if appropriate infrastructure was provided. Australian cities lag behind most European and even some US cities in terms of bicycle infrastructure.

Australian cities also sprawl and this acts against walkable, bikeable and public transport accessible neighbourhoods. The car is used for almost all trips in some outer areas. The days of using a litre of petrol to buy a litre of milk has reached its expiry date. Providing compact development along public transport nodes, as promoted by Professor Rob Adams of the City of Melbourne will help solve the housing shortage in a way that boosts resilience to higher oil prices and emissions targets. Lower speed limits will help to lower fuel consumption and increase road safety, for all road users, thereby encouraging walking and cycling. Reallocating road space to create segregated tram and bus routes will speed up public transport, helping to make the sustainable choice the preferred option. These ideas have all been implemented in cities with superior transport systems to our own. Australian governments could help leave their cities and towns in a better place than when they came to power, by building assets rather than liabilities. There's never been a better time to start. ▲

Elliot Fishman is one of Australia's leading experts on sustainable transport and oil vulnerability. He has worked both internationally and around Australia on a variety of transport issues, with a special interest in energy and infrastructure planning. He is the Director at the Institute for Sensible Transport, an independent think-tank providing strategic advice on transport policy. www.sensibletransport.org.au

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Balancing the Boom

BY **LARISSA WATERS**, THE AUSTRALIAN GREENS MINING SPOKESPERSON & SENATOR FOR QUEENSLAND

The previous mining themed issue of Green magazine was a great conversation-starter, and no doubt got you thinking – what are the real benefits and costs of the mining boom? How much mining is too much? And how much mining can we afford?

Mark Parnell wrote a great profile on the Olympic Dam mine expansion and its impacts, and I was heartened to read about Jeremy Buckingham's amazing work in protecting NSW's land and water from the dangers posed by coal seam gas. All over the country, Greens are reaching out to communities and taking a stand for a more balanced approach to mining in Australia.

But what exactly is a balanced approach? The mining boom in Australia has long been reported as 'you can never have too much of a good thing', and has been credited with employing half of Australia, saving us from the global financial crisis, and being the lifeblood of regional Australia. In this context, the mining boom has the momentum of a tidal wave, with neither the ALP Government nor the Coalition demonstrating any inclination to reign in this runaway industry.

But beyond the enthusiastic promotion of the boom by many media outlets, a closer look at the realities of the mining boom tells a much different story.

In Senate Estimates in February this year, I asked Treasury officials if the mining boom could be credited with saving Australia from recession during the global financial crisis. Their response was that mining did not play a major role in averting a recession for Australia.

Similarly, I was told that the mass job creation claims, including the standard 1-3 jobs multiplier effect much touted by industry (that is, for every one job created in mining, another three flow-on jobs are created in other industries) was a furphy. Dr David Gruen, Executive Director of the Macro Economic Group, said "in a well-functioning economy like ours, with unemployment close to its lowest sustainable rate, it is not the case that individual industries are creating jobs, they are simply re-distributing them... there really isn't a multiplier."

Driven by million-dollar advertising campaigns, most Australians believe that about one in six workers are employed by this sector. However, research by the Australia Institute revealed that mining directly employs less than two per cent of the workforce. With strong local content rules for big mining projects, many more Australian jobs would be created – however, we don't have these rules and so most materials are sourced off-shore.

The profits made from extracting the mineral resources which belong to all of us are enormous. Overall, mining has been forecast to make a mind-



boggling \$600 billion in pure profit over the next decade. BHP posted a profit margin of \$22 billion in 2011, which is more than half the entire annual budget of my home state of Queensland. This kind of revenue, boosting our local economies and flowing back to the Australian public in taxes, really would be a great

benefit to all of us.

Unfortunately, we're not going to see that happen. 83% of mining operations are foreign-owned, and these profits flow back overseas. After relentless lobbying by the industry, the ALP Government replaced the Resources Super Profits Tax with the much weaker Mineral Resource Rent Tax, reducing our share of that \$600 billion in profit from \$200 billion to less than \$40 billion.

This loss of revenue is a huge blow for all of us. \$200 billion could have helped us to implement the Gonski reforms and raise education standards for our kids in every school across the country. It could have been spent on boosting health care, social support systems, light rail, and urban sustainability. Instead, most of this money will stay with the big miners, creating or boosting billionaires such as Clive Palmer and Gina Rinehart.

If the benefits of mining are falling far short of expectations, the costs are certainly substantial. Like Jeremy, I have been travelling all over my state talking to farmers and their families, local land care groups, and bush communities about their concerns over the dangers posed by coal seam gas.

Queensland's prime agricultural land is becoming increasingly pocked with coal seam gas wells, despite both the CSIRO and the National Water Commission saying that they don't yet know the long term impacts of CSG drilling on our groundwater resources. There



SEN. LARISSA WATERS AT THE KERRY COAL SEAM GAS PROTESTS WITH LOCALS. PHOTO: ELISSA MCKAY



are still no independent studies of the true emissions profile of coal seam gas mining in Australia either – taking into account fugitive emissions of methane escaping from the well head or the pipelines, it’s possible that coal seam gas could be as emissions-intensive as coal-fired power.

In 2009, the Walloon aquifer in Queensland was contaminated by a coal seam gas well. Last year, a spill of CSG waste water in the Pilliga in NSW killed off hectares of native forests, and this year, methane was found bubbling up through the Condamine river close to a CSG drill site, although the company did not take responsibility for this occurrence. Farmers and rural communities are becoming increasingly concerned that the CSG industry is gambling with our good agricultural land, and yet landholders don’t have the right to lock the gate against coal seam gas.

I have two bills currently before the Senate – one, to give landholders the right to say no to CSG drilling on their land, and the second to give the federal Environment Minister the power to have a say about major mining developments that significantly impact on water, one of our most precious national resources. So far, the Greens remain the only party in the Australian Parliament to take action to reign in the runaway CSG industry.

In a recent speech to the National Press Club, Australian Greens Leader Christine Milne spoke eloquently of the need to measure our progress as a nation by more than the standard economic growth indicators – to measure our progress by the health of our people and our communities, our levels of education, the disparity between rich and poor, our capacity to feed ourselves into the future, our wealth of biodiversity and the health of our environment.

And on these more fulsome measures, the mining boom is having a significant cost. The number of species on the threatened species list has nearly tripled in the last twenty years. The Great Barrier Reef is in danger of becoming a coal and gas highway for the boom in fossil fuel exports, and UNESCO has warned it could be placed on the ‘World Heritage Site In Danger’ list. We are seeing more and more negative impacts of a fly-in fly-out workforce; drastically changing rural communities and straining social and family relationships.

Sacrificing everything for a mining boom that isn’t delivering a fraction of what it’s promising is economically, socially and environmentally foolish. Mining should be just a part of a strong and diverse economy with good focus on sharing the wealth it creates, avoiding negative environmental impacts, and properly managing the social impacts. The Greens will continue to work towards a more balanced approach to mining, one that recognises the value of what makes Australia a unique and amazing place to live. ▲

MOMENT WITH A MEMBER

DINESH MATTHEW, VIC

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A MEMBER?

About 14 or 15 years. Although I was politically active from a very young age helping out the Labor Party. I saw the light after talking to right wing Labor Senator Jacinta Collins’ office.

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE GREENS?

I joined up during the [voluntary] euthanasia debate. Something about not allowing this human right agitated me. Human rights are very important to me.

I went to my first Greens meetings to try and get Greens to pressure the local council to work on a cat curfew to curb the number of possum deaths.

WHY DO YOU CONTINUE TO BE A MEMBER?

The Greens continue to be the most ethical party around. I am passionate about keeping the Greens ethical and true to doing what is right and not necessarily doing what polling tells us to do.

WHAT IS THE NUMBER ONE ISSUE FOR YOU RIGHT NOW?

Animal Rights is the number one issue for me at the moment. Australia needs to address the carbon/water/land footprint of the western world’s over-consumption of meat.

HIGHLIGHT / BIGGEST CHANGE YOU’VE SEEN?

The biggest change is that the Greens in Victoria got 1.1% in the senate when I first ran as a candidate for the lower house seat of Melbourne Ports (5%). Now in Melbourne Ports we get around 20% and in the Senate we get about 14% in Victoria. It’s been hard work for a long time by a lot of wonderful people and totally worth it.

WHAT HAS YOUR ROLE BEEN IN THE GREENS?

I have been a candidate at local, state and federal levels (six times), National Campaign Manager, State Campaign Manager, and countless times campaign managing local, state and federal campaigns. I have also been a youth affairs spokesperson and LGBTI spokesperson, been a State Councillor and National Councillor as well serving on exec.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE SONG AND WHY?

My favourite song is called the *Origin of Love* from the film *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. It is a song I perform in my one man cabaret show.

SOUTH KOREA

Can't keep a good party down

AFTER BOUNCING BACK FROM BEING DEREGISTERED IN APRIL OF THIS YEAR, WE SPOKE TO **JUNE GYEON LEE**, INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY OF THE GREEN PARTY OF KOREA (GPK) ABOUT THE PARTY'S RECENT INAUGURATION AND WHAT THE WORLD OF GREEN POLITICS LOOKS LIKE IN SOUTH KOREA.

BY **CATHERINE GREEN**

Congratulations on the inauguration of the Green Party of Korea on 13 October! This must have been a significant event after the deregistration of the party in April this year?

Thank you, yes we had a small, successful event with about 120 members. I think it was an exciting time and means we are moving forward. The venue was the agricultural village of Hongsung, about two hours away from Seoul. I think we are the first political party to hold our inauguration in a rural area, so we had many members from rural areas attending and also some from other provinces. This (location) was important because the social and political system is Seoul-oriented and we think it is one of the main issues for the country; reducing the agricultural land and depending too much on imported goods, and the inequality between Seoul and local areas.

I hear that you also had some guests from around the region?

We had one of the co-representatives from the new Japan Greens (Ms Uiko Hasegawa) and also a member of the Steering Committee from the Taiwanese Greens (Mr. Han-shen Pan). This gave us an opportunity to discuss the nuclear issue in the East Asia region. At the public forum held before the inauguration we shared information about how to work together to solve this issue; Japan presented their nuclear policy and Taiwan suggested working together to build a website on nuclear issues in East Asia to share information on policy and future plans, we all agreed on this. This is just our initial regional plan and it will develop in the future.

The nuclear issue is GPK's top priority; we have proposed a basic law in our 'no nuclear energy plan' where we state that we should shut all nuclear plants and change our energy system into a renewable energy-based one by 2030. We have a Presidential election at the end of this year and we want to involve this policy in this election. In the election there will be the governing party candidate and two opposition candidates. The governing party don't have any interest in a 'no nuclear' policy, the two opposition candidates have some policy but it is not very strong.

GPK has done some amazing work to come back from being deregistered earlier this year and already be working on important issues again. Why was the party deregistered?

Here in Korea we have the Political Party Act that regulates political parties, and if you fail to get 2% of votes in federal elections you will be de-registered. This law was created by a former President in the 80s when there was military rule. But right now South Korea is democratised and has not been military run for over 20 years. We believe this law is anachronistic and we filed a lawsuit that it is against the constitution of this nation, and against the right of freedom of political association.

After we were deregistered we fought hard to rebuild the party. But this was not difficult compared to our first registration! Our members, they stayed with us. Before deregistration we had about 5000 members and now it's over 7000 – some people were encouraged to join after deregistration. During deregistration our members even continued to pay the membership fee of about \$5 per month so the party could continue. Their loyalty is very high!

And since re-forming, what have been some of the successes of GPK?

Our members' loyalty is one of our big successes. During the six months we were deregistered we continued normal activity, like solidarity activities. Our most important activity in this time was to protect organic farm land from the Four Major Rivers Project. The government decided to implement this project at the beginning of its administration, even though there was a lot of opposition. There were

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two major problems with the project. The first was environmental; the construction of the dams and the dredging would change the flow of rivers and destroy natural environment and farming land. Second, the project kicked farmers off their land; over 24,000 farmers have been kicked away from their land. There was a site remaining where only three or four

“During deregistration our members even continued to pay the membership fee of about \$5 per month so the party could continue. Their loyalty is very high!”

farmers remained and one of these farmers was a GPK proportional representative candidate at the last general election and the GPK had joined the fight to protect this area for a long time. On this final part of land, the government wanted to build bicycle roads and entertainment facilities. The farmers proposed building an eco-education park that would also include organic farms instead. This was a concession by the farmers and the government rejected the proposal at first, but then finally gave in and eradicated their initial plans. Finally, the farmers won! We think it is a partial success; a symbolic win perhaps. They cannot run their organic farm land as it was before but the government accepted the opinion from farmers and civic groups and we saw that we could change the project by the power of grassroots action.



Can you tell me more about another campaign you are currently running against a military base that is being developed?

This one is still happening. The government has started the construction of a naval base. At first activists made a human barricade, but the government just pushed ahead. Then the activists came up with an idea of a Grand March from the location of the naval base to Seoul on foot. They started marching in August and they will reach Seoul in November. They are now in the southern peninsular and there are about 40 activists remaining but as they approach Seoul they will gather more and more numbers.

What will be the focus of GPK in 2013 and beyond?

Our top priority is our nuclear plan and shutting Korean nuclear plants, to eradicate all plans to build new nuclear power plants, and transfer to a new energy system based on renewable energy by 2030. They are out-dated and still operating in their original condition. They are dangerous; there have been over 600 power plant accidents but because of low public awareness people don't feel this danger. South Korea already has 21 plants and there are plans to build eight more. This density is the highest of any country across the world I think. Opposition is mainly from GPK and civil society. Some MPs agree to a 'no nuclear' policy but their voice is not strong enough. Our most significant success so far is making this issue public and putting it on the political agenda.

Also in 2014 we will have local elections here, so we will have a focus on local issues too. Before this time, local Green parties need to be strengthened and their activities prosperous and we need to develop policy. So far the nuclear issue is leading policy discussion, but policy about other issues like animal rights and agricultural production also needs to be developed. ▲

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

GREENS SENATOR FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA **SCOTT LUDLAM** TALKS ABOUT THE ILLUSION OF URBAN SPRAWL AFFORDABILITY, AND WHAT THE REAL COSTS ARE.

Something has gone badly wrong in the housing affordability debate in Australia, even as our cities continue to break new records for extreme housing stress. The conventional wisdom has the definition of 'affordable' resting on cheap land at the far periphery of our great cities. Even if this wasn't wiping out extensive tracts of urban bushland and peri-urban farming country at an accelerating rate, the fact that sandlots far over the horizon are the only places that even vaguely fit the definition of 'affordable' show how dysfunctional the Australian housing market has become.

In an increasingly cruel hoax played on first home buyers and renters fleeing unaffordable inner city and middle ring suburbs; the stereotype of 'affordable' has been limited to how much it costs to get through the door of a brick-and-tile fitted with big air conditioning units and a mandatory car per working adult.

At the right scale, this pattern of urban development has a lot going for it: peace and quiet, places for kids to stretch their legs, room for a backyard garden, and plenty of unpaved permeable ground for rainfall to recharge the water table. The problem is that we're not doing it at the right scale. Public transport has suffered decades of neglect and now mainly serves the inner city areas, meanwhile hundreds of thousands of people are finding themselves suffering long commutes in paralysed traffic, far from jobs and services. As petrol prices rise, the vulnerability increases and people are finding themselves living on finer margins, even as traffic congestion devours more and more time.

Implanting monolithic high-rises within suburban areas isn't the answer either: 'infill' now has a bad name in many places as it has come to mean developer-driven white cubes looming over peoples' back yards. Is there a middle way somewhere, a template for

reclaiming the best our cities can be?

I've become increasingly interested in the model sketched by Rob Adams, a Melbourne-based researcher who undertook the first detailed study of the potential of a mild increase in density along Melbourne's foreseeably expanded tram network. Out of this study, some intriguing conclusions emerge: the possibility of diverse, affordable housing clustered along transit routes woven throughout the city, leaving most of the urban fabric untouched but bringing jobs and services out towards where most people live. Do this well, and cities can grow without expanding. Ultimately this recreates the kind of 'network cities' that prevailed in the early years of the 20th century before ubiquitous private transport, but in the 21st, it will be augmented with rapid transit, broadband and the best of urban agriculture. Linking cities and major regional centres with rapid rail connections and fast data connections brings the picture into focus: affordability doesn't have to come at the cost of sustainability.

There are enough examples of this working at a small scale in Australian cities to provoke the question: what would happen if local, state and federal governments worked deliberately with local communities to shift infrastructure spending and planning priorities to this model in a systematic way?

For more than a decade, the Howard Government stayed out of city policy and no formal mechanism existed for national funding of urban infrastructure. We've also had twenty years of capital gains tax exemptions, absurdly generous negative gearing provisions, and the utterly maladaptive and inflationary cash handout known as the first homeowners grant. Not only have these policies not increased supply of affordable housing; they've actively inflated a property bubble cheered on by the investment community, now





openly referred to as a Ponzi scheme[i].

In cheerleading housing as just another asset class, we've lost sight of the fact that affordable housing is actually a human right. We'll have more to say about that during the election campaign.

The tide on infrastructure spending may at least be on the turn. The new electrified light rail systems are under construction or in advanced planning stages around Australia, the halting transition from road to rail freight networks is now moving beyond rhetoric, and there is a growing interest in a high speed rail corridor linking the major population centres of the east coast. Even the humble bicycle is reclaiming its place in the transport ecosystem, with a growing campaign for Commonwealth cycling funding to support transport plans in which walking, cycling and public transport reclaim central roles.

If its rollout is not sabotaged by a change of government, the ubiquity of the National Broadband Network will also have profound consequences for the renewal of regional economies and the ability of small-scale startups to play to global markets.

'Transitioning to a zero-carbon economy' sounds simple if you say it quickly, but it's going to take unprecedented collaboration between business, civil society and all three tiers of Government. We've been victims of our own prosperity over the last few decades, in the sense that there is very low community understanding of the vicious consequences of unrestrained growth in material consumption, and just how close these threats are. So while we step up our advocacy for the solutions, it's important not to sugar coat our message or pretend that there are decades more of 'business as usual' ahead of us. If we want the things we hold most precious to stay the same, we're going to need to change. ▲

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Rob Adams at TEDxSydney TEDxSydney
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MOMENT WITH A MEMBER

NERILEE BOSHAMMER, BUNBURY WA

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A MEMBER?

I have been a member of the Greens for almost five years.

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE GREENS?

I joined the Greens because I felt that they were the only political party willing to stand up for what they believe in and to truly listen to what the voters want. The Greens are grassroots focused, and so am I. I feel very strongly that top down imposed initiatives, particular in relation to social and environmental issues, don't work. They need to be community driven and the community needs to value them, in order for them to be successful.

WHY DO YOU CONTINUE TO BE A MEMBER?

The Greens continue to reinforce to me that they have my best interests at heart. They are fighting for my basic rights as an Australian and particularly as a woman. "We are a society, not an economy". That catch cry really resonates with me and, I know, with many others. Our economy should exist to serve Australian communities and services, NOT the other way around.

WHAT IS THE NUMBER ONE ISSUE FOR YOU?

The one that is so close to my heart is the current threat to our magnificent South West forests, through not just continued, but continually escalating rates of logging, under the auspice of the WA State Government. From the karri in Walpole and Denmark, to the marri/jarrah complexes on the Darling Scarp, they are all at peril. The State Government has just released its Draft Management Plan and it is very concerning from a conservation point of view. These forests are vital to the South West, not just environmentally and ecologically, but they are one of our biggest tourist attractions. One of our biggest assets is currently being devastated, and I am concerned that the public at large is simply not aware of it.

HIGHLIGHT / BIGGEST CHANGE YOU'VE SEEN?

That's easy. The Greens winning the balance of power in the last Federal election. This overwhelming demonstration from the Australian public that they wanted change really moved me. It felt wonderful to be part of something so positive and gave me such hope for the future.

WHAT HAS YOUR ROLE BEEN IN THE GREENS?

My involvement with the Greens has gradually increased over the years. I joined as a passionate environmentalist and rural community advocate, then started helping out at polling booths and Greens events, and now, I am running for the Lower House Seat of Warren-Blackwood, in Support of Giz Watson as our South West Upper House candidate. I believe very strongly that for the South West to survive and thrive in future, we need her in Government. We need that third voice, the voice of reason, the voice of positivity and the voice of the people.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE SONG AND WHY?

At the risk of sounding very cliché, I do love *Stairway to Heaven* by Led Zep. They are one of my favourite bands and I love this song because, one, its just awesome, and two, its got such an important message. You cant take all the shiny stuff with you when you go. All that matters is what you do when you are here.



Is it better to vote for an Independent or a Green?

BY LOUISE CROSSLEY

The idea of politicians thinking and acting independently, rather than as mindless cogs in a political machine, is appealing to many people.

As a Greens member, I am active in a seat with a sitting Independent MP and sometimes have to justify my membership of a political party to progressive and environmentally aware friends. Younger people especially often feel that organising in groups somehow makes politics cynical and unworthy. Even the Greens are accused of being 'greedy for power', simply by running for election.

This view can undermine our democratic process by discouraging people from voting at all. But mostly it can influence political outcomes by making Independents seem a more attractive option – perhaps removed from the 'taint' of political parties?

Recently in Australia, John Ralston Saul made his view known. He urged people to join and influence democratic political parties, particularly young people. He asserts that political party organisations are the most direct path for social reform: "change is made by the people who hold power...if you don't take power in the legislature, you can't change policy."

This is a refreshing message for Australia, where we regularly hear about the trend to keep 'politics' at arm's length. A drip feed of media reports expand on the theme that "political parties have a bad name; they've become a turn-off for the young, many of whom want to engage only on an ad hoc issue-by-issue basis."

But where's the substance behind this negative perception? Is there any evidence that an Independent delivers more for his/her electorate than a representative from a political party? And what about the reform and change that environmentally aware voters want – who can best deliver that?

To find out, I compared the Parliamentary performance of Adam Bandt, Green Party MP for Melbourne, with Andrew Wilkie, Independent MP for Denison. In September 2010, they were both elected for the first time as members of the House of Representatives in the 43rd Federal Parliament.

On several measures, I found significant differences in their Parliamentary performance from September 2010 to June 2012:

- Total number of speeches made in Parliament: Bandt 120, Wilkie 49
- Number of Second Reading speeches (the main opportunity for MPs to make policy statements on proposed legislation): Bandt 42, Wilkie 6
- Number of amendments to legislation proposed: Bandt proposed 16 packages of amendments – including Greens' changes to social security laws, work health and safety laws, a coal seam gas bill, and improvements to the coverage and impact of the mining tax; Wilkie proposed two packages of amendments – one of which was to reduce the number of mining companies that have to pay the mining tax, even though there are no mining companies in his electorate.
- Number of motions proposed: Bandt 21, Wilkie 2
- Adjournment debates: Bandt 8, Wilkie 3
- Constituency and Member's Statements: Bandt 16, Wilkie 10
- Private Members Bills (proposed new laws sponsored by the MP): Bandt 12, Wilkie 4

These figures suggest that in terms of Parliamentary work, the Independent is totally out-performed by the Greens MP.

Importantly, the figures also indicate that the Independent has a narrower policy scope, and a reduced ability to influence a range of national discussions in the Parliament. Of Wilkie's six Second Reading speeches, half were simply to utter a sentence in support of amendments by others.

In contrast, the scope of Bandt's 42 Second Reading contributions is very broad – the topics covered his Greens party portfolio areas, and also debates around climate change, social security, schools assistance, telecommunications, migration, higher education, cybercrime, and family assistance.

In some of the major Parliamentary debates where many MPs spoke, Wilkie chose not to speak at all. For example, 140 MPs spoke about the historic Clean Energy Bill, yet Wilkie made no speech to express the

views of his constituency about any of Australia's new climate change policy. In a green-leaning seat like Denison, this would be extremely disappointing to his electorate.

The content of Constituency and Member's Statements makes it clear that Bandt consults widely in his electorate to address issues such as withdrawal of funding for adult education and neighbourhood houses, the needs of migrant groups for recognition and support, the local impact of high voltage transformers, and employment issues.

Wilkie on the other hand appears less concerned with issues in his own electorate, but rather refers to more general Tasmania-wide issues such as health care or the pulp mill; and conspicuously uses his Federal platform to criticize the State government.

The quantitative and qualitative data suggest that an electorate may be better served by a hard-working MP who is part of an active democratic party, than by an Independent (no matter how hard-working) with no parliamentary team or party structure as support.

Resourcing of individual MPs is not at issue – all have the same number of staff. However, a Greens MP has access to party room discussions and the ability to share the expert knowledge and wide experience of another nine Greens parliamentarians.

This is by no means a comprehensive analysis – other Independents compared to other party representatives in other jurisdictions may reveal a different story. However, these data do suggest that an Independent representative may be significantly less able to cover not only the electorate's specific concerns, but also a wide range of issues at the national level. Both measures should be regarded as important indicators of democratic health.

This in turn suggests that voters, our democracy and

our chance of creating reform for a more sustainable Australia, will be better served by electing a Green than an Independent where the choice is available.

Those who romanticise the role of Independents are in danger of endorsing an 'anti-party' political system which would have no policies apart from trying to get a candidate elected, and favouring issues with simplistic popular appeal.

Political parties are easy to blame for a range of ills, but they actually perform the essential democratic function of creating the connection between politics and society. They pick

up demands from society, evaluate the issues, and shape them into policy alternatives through a process of extensive discussion by party members and their representatives. This ensures there are different choices in the political 'marketplace' – an essential characteristic of democracy.

Of course, Independents also make an important contribution to the marketplace of political ideas, but are less able to provide democratic input to their work and create robust policy alternatives. In the next Parliament, where it is likely that Independents will no longer hold the balance of power, they could easily be excluded from legislative power and decision-making.

Green-minded voters want their MPs to implement progressive and ecologically sustainable policies, and counter-balance the group-think of the major parties. Their choice is clear. Expanding the Greens team in our Federal Parliament will deliver more than an assortment of isolated Independents ever could. ▲

Louise Crossley was a founding member of the Tasmanian and Australian Greens; the first Convenor of the former and the second Convenor of the latter. She ran for the Senate in Tasmania in 1998, and coordinated the Global Greens Charter in 2001.

“The quantitative and qualitative data suggest that an electorate may be better served by a hard-working MP who is part of an active democratic party, than by an Independent...”

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PUTTING PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN PRIVATE HANDS

BY **LEE RHIANNON**, AUSTRALIAN GREENS TRANSPORT SPOKESPERSON AND SENATOR FOR NSW

When governments decide to hand to the private sector the job of constructing motorways and building and operating public transport, history shows the public can receive some unexpected and unpleasant surprises.

My home state of NSW provides some telling examples.

For instance in the early 1990s a contract was drawn up between the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority and the private builders and operators of the M2 motorway in Sydney's North West.

A special clause allowed the motorway operators to claim compensation from the public purse if their profits were dented by new and competing public transport projects.

This clause was repeated in the case of Sydney's controversial Cross City Tunnel project, requiring the private operators to be compensated if public transport upgrades caused a decrease in tunnel traffic.

The end result is that if the motorway operator activates this provision, designed to protect private sector profits, the public wears the cost.

This experience shows that when big corporations are given the running of public and active transport projects the primary interest becomes company profit not what is best for the public. Services often decline whilst costs to commuters rise.

In NSW the Greens were able to expose a number of the motorway scandals as we successfully moved in the NSW Upper House for the public release of motorway contracts. What we uncovered revealed how governments have effectively privatised the profits while 'socialising' the risks.

The cycling community has been the loser with the construction of Sydney motorways. Under the former NSW Labor government, motorway projects were

required to include bike lanes to gain project approval however the rules did not require the bike lanes to be retained.

The NSW government agreed to the private operators of the M2 and the Cross City Tunnel removing bike lanes on their motorways in order to expand the number of lanes for additional cars.

The M2 bike lane was removed to avoid a predicted traffic crisis damaging the government's standing and to increase the private company's cash flow.

NSW residents were also left carrying the can when the Cross City and Lane Cove tunnels went into receivership.

The NSW government was forced to fork out \$25 million in compensation to the private owners of the Lane Cove Tunnel.

A \$13 million in penalty payment was also handed over to the private operators of Sydney's M5 East tunnel.

The NSW Auditor-General has predicted \$1.1 billion of public funding will be spent on Sydney's Harbour Tunnel by 2022 to ensure viability for its private sector owners.

Private sector road projects in NSW have consistently lost operators money and cost the public purse. As recently pointed out by Dr Michelle Zeibots of Sydney's University of Technology, building motorways has neither solved Sydney's traffic problems nor provided financial returns to investors.

The private sector has also been given control of some key Sydney public transport projects.

The Sydney airport rail link turned out to be an expensive lemon. Developed as a public-private partnership, it flunked and the NSW government ended up outlaying \$800 million from the public purse as a result.

Undoubtedly this is not where most voters expect their tax dollars to go.

The Greens believe public ownership of transport is important in its own right.

Transport is core infrastructure. It is critical to building cities and towns that people are happy to live in, creating a greener environment and promoting social well-being. Public transport is a social equity issue as it enables disadvantaged people to engage in the wider community.

Public transport infrastructure has been built up over many years. It should be held in trust for future generations, not sold for short term political or financial gain.

Shifting responsibility for essential services like trains, ferries, buses and roads to the private sector undermines the public's capacity to ensure these needs are met.

Giving the private sector the job of operating services, like Sydney's iconic harbour ferries, also risks that they will 'cherry pick' the more popular routes and leave commuters with fewer services.

Private builders and operators of the transport system are less accountable than government departments. And getting to the bottom of what has happened when a privately built or operated transport project goes bung is extremely difficult. The contracts governing them are stamped 'commercial in confidence', making them near impossible for the public to properly scrutinise.

While a campaign to resist the push to privatise public transport has been active in recent decades in NSW, the government's real preoccupation has been with using private companies to build new motorways.

Expert advice from transport planners that new private sector built roads are no panacea for congestion has been ignored.

Instead the ears of politicians have been successfully bent by the likes of the NRMA, the road and trucking industry and construction companies.

Companies like John Holland, Leighton, Thiess and Macquarie Bank have given big donations to the major parties which many suspect has greased the private road building business, at the expense of public transport.

The result has been more than a decade of roads spending that far outstrips the public transport budget.

Overcrowded trains and buses are unable to service Sydney's sprawling population.

There is a clear mismatch between what the public wants and what is being delivered.

While a 2011 University of Sydney survey concluded that more than half of NSW residents believe public transport was the highest-priority transport issue in Australia, federal spending on roads beat spending on rail by a ratio of five to one during 2011/2012.

And when it comes to bicycle or active transport spending the cupboard is virtually bare.

The era of motorways should be left in the 20th century, considering the challenges of climate change, peak oil, air pollution and congestion.

But instead of the 21st century being about public transport, spending looks to stay skewed towards

private road and motorway building – starving other mass transit solutions.

The NSW Premier, Barry O'Farrell, just announced \$1.8 billion to build the 33 kilometre WestConnex Motorway.

“experience shows that when big corporations are given the running of public and active transport projects the primary interest becomes company profit not what is best for the public.”

The National's leader, Warren Truss, has recently promised a Coalition government would cancel \$2 billion allocated for the Parramatta to Epping rail link and spend it on the Pacific Highway.

Opposition leader, Tony Abbott, has earmarked \$3 billion towards Melbourne's East West Link and Sydney's M4 East.

And Transport Minister Anthony Albanese deserves the title 'Minister for Motorways', as he is backing the construction of Sydney's M4 East, M5 East duplication and the F3 to M2 tunnel.

Privatisation of transport places at risk the quality of public transport, environmental protection, and in some cases, revenue streams for governments.

It's time to end governments dancing with the private sector and letting their profit motives lead.

Borrowing to build key public transport infrastructure that Australia so desperately needs is a smart solution for the future.

This is the real panacea for congestion and pollution and their associated social and economic costs. ▲





AUSTRALIAN YOUNG GREENS CONFERENCE

BY MADELEINE CHARLES, OMNI DEMARCO & ALEX SURACE

Young Greens from around Australia came together in Hobart during August for the first Australian Young Greens Conference hosted by the Tasmanian Young Greens. At the conference we were joined by inspirational representatives from the party including Christine Milne who spoke of the challenges facing our society and the planet in coming decades, including food production and access to water. These are issues that we as young Greens will need to find ways to respond to, along with ensuring that social, environmental and economic aspects of society are embedded into our system in a way that will enable our society and planet to support future population forecasts, with particular consideration of climatic changes.

The conference provided an opportunity to share our own stories about what motivated us to get involved with the Greens and to discuss what our vision for the future is - for the planet and for the party. We wanted to focus on the future as a way of fostering a collective commitment to the challenges, as well as

ensuring we continue to find strength in our diversity. To help frame our visioning exercise we heard from a range of speakers and long-time activists. Tasmanian Greens MP Nick McKim shared the story of how he got involved in the environmental movement, Rodney Croome shared his personal fight for equal rights for same sex relationships, Anna-Rose gave her account of working tirelessly for progressive environmental and social change through AYCC, and Tom Baxter spoke of the reality of what's happening on the environmental legislative front in Australia.

Their stories, and those of others, acted as a springboard for personal and group reflection on how we as young Greens can get involved in creating positive and progressive social and environmental change.

Through discussion we found that while our own visions for the future were diverse there were also many commonalities. Our visions included: a more equal and democratic global future, a society that thrives within planetary limits, recognition of past



PHOTOS: JAMES HARRISON



injustices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, and an ability to operate a society that respects our natural environment while ensuring social and economic equality for all. At the end of all this, when the weight of the world could have set in, Bob Brown reminded us that we are not alone in finding solutions. We work alongside over 80 Greens parties working hard on progressive global change that resonate with the imperatives our party stands on, including participatory and grassroots democracy. We were also reminded to think global and act local with a report provided from the Global Young Greens network, who met prior to the 3rd Global Greens Congress in Senegal earlier this year. This network is a hub of young Greens groups from all over the world working hard to facilitate positive change.

“The conference provided an opportunity to share our own stories about what motivated us to get involved with the Greens and to discuss what our vision for the future is - for the planet, and for the party.”

Overall, the conference was a phenomenal success with young Greens coming together from across the nation to collaborate and brainstorm ideas for the direction of the party and movement in the coming years and decades. The newly established Australian Young Greens working group, with delegates from most states now elected, is already planning our 2013 Australian Young Greens conference. We are also facilitating further engagement with the youth of today to help move the Australian Greens into the future; all the while having fun, meeting like-minded people and getting involved with the issues that matter to our party.

If you would like to get involved with the Australian Young Greens please get in contact with your local branch and find us on all good social media outlets. ▲

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Queensland

A Geographic Frontline for the Climate Movement

BY AHRI TALLON

Over the last two years, electoral support of the climate movement has been stunted. The reality that we have allowed our political mandate to slip away unnoticed calls for some deep reflection as a movement. Pondering how we can act on climate change in a way that galvanises the call for action and engages both progressives and conservatives should be on everyone's 'to do' list. However, the reality is that unless we as a movement can physically move beyond the green enclaves where our values are strongest, to new conservative frontlines we will struggle to achieve this.

Growing up around Nimbin in Northern NSW made me a fervent believer in the need for our movement to avoid cultural stagnation and instead focus on growth. Many judge Nimbin purely on the towns' strong drug culture, however some know that if you scratch deeper you will find a remarkable community that has been at the epicentre of the environmental movement. It's the place where permaculture first flourished, the first solar panel shop started, and where the first forest blockade in the world took place. The local economy works to have a restorative environmental benefit, while collectively the community imagines diverse possibilities for a sustainable future.

Despite the idyllic description I give my beloved home, it is not a place I would recommend for more



than a visit. Many people have moved to Nimbin over the years to escape the often scary modern world, in exchange for a place that is more nurturing, beautiful and balanced. Growing up as a frustrated activist, I began to feel that many of these people had unknowingly turned their back on all the work that needs to be done in the less idyllic parts of the world and given

up on their responsibility to search for and guide our brothers and sisters who are lost in the fog of the social, economic and environmental crisis we are in.

Nimbin, like many other rural and urban green enclaves around Australia has become a place of cultural propagation but is also a refuge for our movement. In a way these places are our hearts, where we grow strongest, and where our blood always flows to. But today, after 40 years of alternate culture we need to build a culture of opposition and growth that will transcend the geographic limitations of our escapism.

Movement and activist mobility has been a crucial part of social movements throughout history. Many student activists in the US civil rights movement dropped out of university and moved to a southwestern town where racial oppression was strongest in order to confront it. Equally in Australia, thousands of activists have travelled to places of significance for months on end such as the Franklin River, Daintree and Jabiluka to protect these threatened places. Throughout history there have been times when movements have needed to transcend their heartland and move to the front line where the political battle was being fought.

Paul Gilding wrote in 'The Great Disruption' that each nation will need to be put on a 'war footing' and dedicate its full economic might to reducing emissions if we are to mitigate climate change. This raises an important question: how do we expect to get our country on a 'war footing' to tackle climate change if our movement cannot show that same courage? Like the ANZAC troops who travelled to Tobruk, we need change agents in the thousands who are willing to relocate their energy to the front lines of the climate movement.

Such courage is needed more than anywhere else in Queensland. Our favourite buddies; Joh Bjelke-Petersen, Pauline Hanson, Clive Palmer and Bob Katter, all come from the sunny state and more recently Queensland has consolidated itself as the stronghold of Liberal power. The immense conservative power is also being wielded in outback North Queensland where the largest expansion of coalmines in the world's history is taking place. It is estimated that the total emissions from the coal in mines such as the 'China First Project'



AHRI TALLON

The Galilee Basin: Epicentre of the coal rush

Mega mines in the Galilee Basin would need hundreds of kilometres of new rail lines to transport nearly 300 million tonnes of coal each year to ports in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. At what cost?

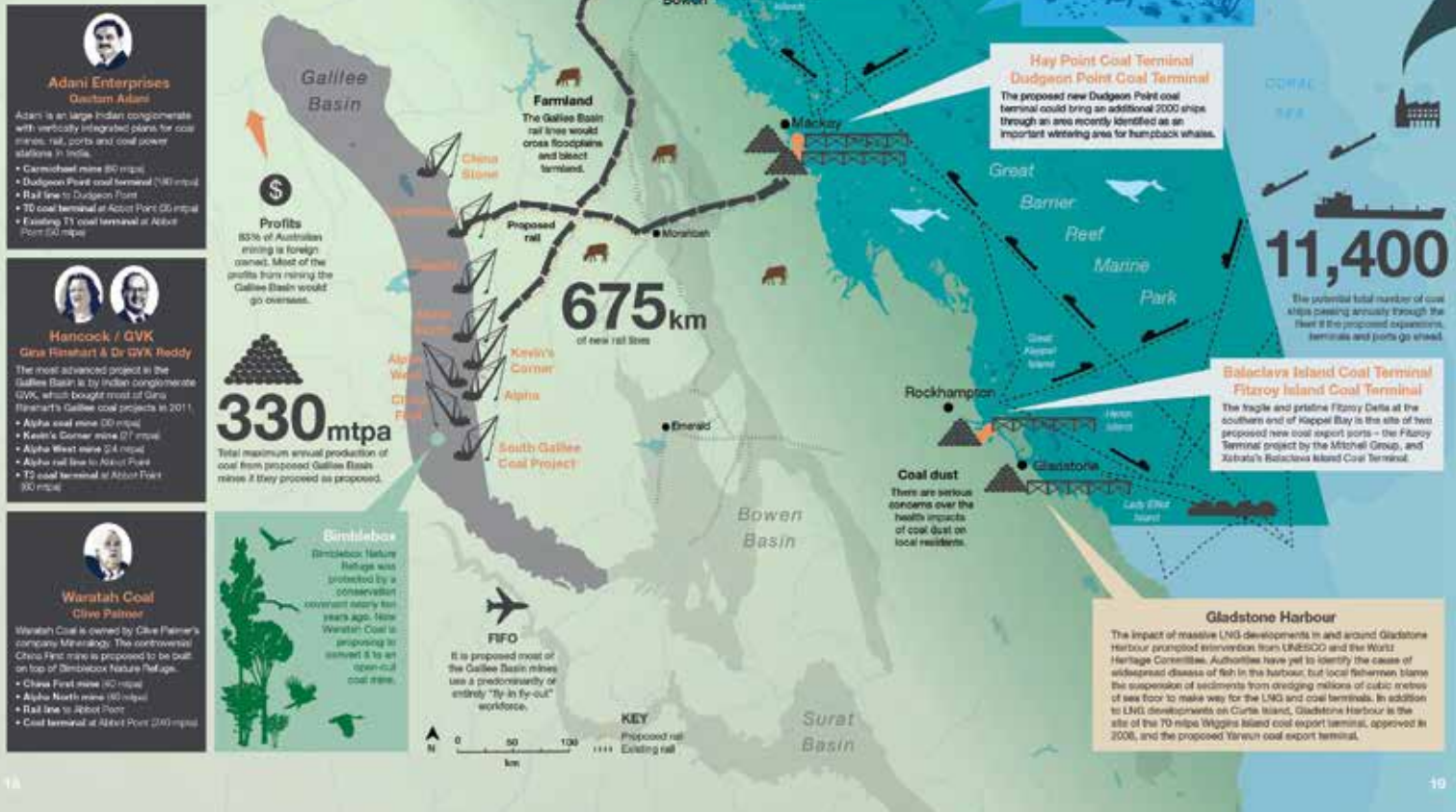


IMAGE COURTESY GREENPEACE

in the Galilee basin will account for 6.5% of the world's carbon budget until 2050.

But with every crisis there is an opportunity. As a place that has been, and will continue to be, ravaged by natural disasters Queensland is an opportunity. It allows us to start talking about the direct impacts of climate change because people here are living and feeling those impacts. Recently in the US, polls have shown that belief in climate change has risen to as high as 67% because of extreme weather and the work of climate campaigners to connect the dots. We have the same opportunity to transcend ideological barriers by demonstrating the impact of climate change on people's health, livelihoods and future.

The theory behind such strategic opportunities is explained in the ground-breaking book 'Organising Cools the Planet' by Joshua Kahn Russel and Hilary Moore. The book talks about how we can better 'align our frontline' and has become a seminal text throughout the youth climate movement. Russel and Moore describe a frontline as "where an issue is fought and won, and can be seen as a place to campaign in as well as a set of issues to build power around - the more appealing your frontline is to a broad range of people, the more support your issue gets". The strategy is to bring together issues that a number of people are talking about, and build power out of common demands. The frontline in Queensland and around the country present an opportunity for our movement to align with communities that are directly impacted by the climate crisis.

There will probably be no better time than now if a move to the sunshine state was ever on the cards. There are so many frontlines ripe for the picking: coal and gas proposals everywhere, multiplying conservative governments, some of the world's natural wonders in jeopardy, and a whole lot of potentially angry citizens standing up.

“Movement and activist mobility has been a crucial part of social movements throughout history.”

For me, growing up in the hippest town in Australia has made me want to run far away from it so I can work with all the people who never experienced the vision for the world I was given. I have recently moved to Mackay and am trying to put these beliefs into practice. And after one month I am feeling like one very out of place hippy kid, but giving it my best. ▲

Ahri Tallon is a 21 year old organiser at the Mackay Conservation Group. He is one of a number of AYCC organisers who are moving across Australia to organise within communities at the frontline of climate change. He also founded the Australian Education for Sustainability Alliance and has worked on a number of other small projects.



SYDNEY TO MELBOURNE IN JUST THREE HOURS?

ADAM BANDT, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE GREENS AND GREENS MP FOR MELBOURNE KEEPS US ON TRACK WITH THE HIGH SPEED RAIL DEBATE.

Imagine getting from the centre of Melbourne to the centre of Sydney in just 3 hours by train. It would be possible with high speed rail.

High speed rail was a key part of the agreement between the Australian Greens and the Gillard Government, and included a promise from the government to undertake an implementation study into high speed rail.

The first phase of that study has been released and it clearly demonstrates that a high speed rail network on the East Coast of Australia is achievable and affordable.

Many countries around the world have been operating high speed rail for many years. Japan opened its first high speed rail line in the 1960s and France in the early 1980s. These European and Japanese high speed rail networks have terrific records of safety and reliability.

In Spain the route between Madrid and Seville carries more people between those cities than car and airplane combined. And the Spanish Government has a plan to have 90% of the population within 50 kilometres of a high speed rail station by 2020.

South Korea's KTX, has reduced the journey time from Seoul to Busan from over four hours to 2 hours and 40 minutes, and plans are underway to extend the line to 80% of the country by 2020.

The faster journey times have changed people's working lives with many workers who used to live near their workplace now able to live further afield.

In the United States, the Obama administration wants \$53 billion over a quarter of a century spent on a national high speed rail network, with a goal of 80% access to high speed intercity trains by 2020.

The UK Government has published its preferred route for the first phase of high speed rail from London to the West Midlands. The route would connect to the Channel Tunnel and Heathrow Airport, providing an alternative to short-haul aviation.

While the first phase of our Australian study makes clear the case for high Speed rail on the East coast, the Minister has not yet committed the government to building and construction.

The government needs to commit to a whole of east coast network with a priority on the Melbourne-Canberra-Sydney link, and next year's Budget needs to allocate the funding necessary to progress the project beyond the ideas set out in the study. In particular, it is vital the government commit adequate funds to establish an organisation or corporation that will implement the plan for high speed rail.

The government must also work with State governments to secure the corridors that will be needed particularly in cities and regional centres.

Phase 2 of the implementation study is due to be released by the end of this year. This second phase will consider in more detail the preferred routes, the program for constructing the system, the financing needs, governance arrangements and implementation plans. It will also provide advice on the specific environmental, social, urban and regional development and economic impacts of the recommended high speed rail program.

High speed rail will transform our regional towns and our cities; bringing economic development and people closer together. Combined with investments in clean energy, high speed rail can be a key part of our strategy for tackling climate change and can create jobs and investment in our manufacturing industry at a time when it is under pressure. ▲

For more information about the strategic study on the implementation of high speed rail on the east coast of Australia, including the final report on Phase One is available online. www.infrastructure.gov.au/rail/trains/high_speed/index.aspx

Christine's Column

THE GREENS WANT TO SEE GROWTH, BUT GROWTH IN QUALITY OF LIFE, GROWTH IN ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY, GROWTH IN EQUALITY OF SOCIETY, AND GROWTH THAT PLANS FOR THE LONG TERM.



At the speech to the National Press Club I argued

“The economy is a tool; a tool we humans invented - like democracy and politics - to help govern our relationships between each other, and between ourselves and the world we live in. If our economic tools are not getting the outcomes we want, making us happy, safe, healthy, better educated and fulfilled, and protecting and preparing our country for an increasingly uncertain future in a world on track to be 4 degrees warmer, then it is time our economic tools changed.”

The Australian Bureau of Statistics released a report earlier this month that showed that while we are improving health and education, our indicators for productivity, biodiversity and atmosphere are going backwards, and we've made no progress on housing.

Only when we start paying as much attention to how well we educate our children, how healthy we are, how happy we are, and how clean our environment is as we do to our GDP numbers will we have an economy that serves people and nature, not the other way around.

Speech to the Sydney Institute

During a recent night at the Sydney Institute, I had the opportunity to meet a dynamic group of 25 young professionals at dinner. It was such an engaging and stimulating discussion, and they were especially interested in learning about how we use social media.

However the topic of the speech I delivered that night was on a sadder subject and one that I feel passionately about - the need to bring our troops home from Afghanistan. Before my speech I read Major John Cantwell's book *Exit Wounds*, which I thoroughly recommend as a courageous and well-argued book.

“I know, absolutely, that the men who died in Afghanistan were doing what they loved, with mates they respected, for a cause - rejecting extremism, denying terrorism, helping a needy people - which is honourable.”

“But will our efforts, no matter how impressive locally, significantly influence the myriad problems afflicting the government and people of Afghanistan?”

It is hard to withdraw from a war where so much abuse and terror, especially targeting women and girls is rampant.

We need to listen to the women in Afghanistan who say, in the words of Afghan MP Fawzia Koofi, that “war begets yet more violence”. Karzai's government, which has our support, lacks commitment to ending violence against women. Ms Koofi argues that:

“to reduce this kind of violence, we need to have strong commitments from the government, which is not there. We don't see perpetrators of human rights violation being put on trial and receiving the required punishment they are supposed to receive.”

We are not abandoning Afghanistan, but want to work with these strong women and communities to help build strong democratic institutions.

Sexism has been a major focus of parliamentary and public debate recently, and sadly sexist remarks and behaviour remain pervasive in the Parliament. We should be grateful however that we have reached a point where we can debate these issues in parliament, unlike Malala Yousufzai, who is fighting for her life after being shot by the Taliban for her outspoken advocacy for the education of women and girls in Afghanistan.

The Greens remain committed to making sure our aid budget goes to support the health and education of women, children and communities around the world.

- Christine



BIKE BLACKSPOT CAMPAIGN

WWW.BIKEBLACKSPOT.ORG

The Australian Greens have repeatedly requested that cycling receive federal transport funding. Last year, we made a **budget submission for \$80 million***, however this was rejected by the Government.

The National Cycling Strategy, agreed to by State and Federal Governments, set a target to double the rate of cycling by 2016 - with no funding attached. Meanwhile the Victorian government has slashed its cycling budget and WA is barely catching up to the funding levels that existed in the mid-1990s.

We want to change that and will make the case for substantial and sustained funding for cycling using the Bike Blackspot campaign.

Cyclists around Australia who are fed up with being endangered, ignored and neglected by governments are invited to share their experiences of our nation's bike blackspots and help us to make the case for why cycling funding is urgently needed.

Cycling blackspots are being documented and reported by cyclists using the Bike Blackspot app for iPhone. If you don't have an iPhone, simply email your feedback with the location and a photo of the blackspot to Scott Ludlam. Scott.Ludlam@aph.gov.au

Tell us!

Where are the most obvious gaps or dangerous parts of the cycle network in your area?

Where is key cycling infrastructure lacking?

Which routes are incomplete?

Where are end of trip facilities most needed?

(Photos really help, so make sure you include one so we can see what you mean).

Your feedback is sent to your state transport minister, the federal transport minister, Greens Senator Scott Ludlam, and the Greens transport spokesperson in your state. Your report is also logged on the bike blackspot map and will be used to make the case for better bike funding.

Visit www.bikeblackspot.org



* <http://scott-ludlam.greensmps.org.au/content/motions/budget-submission-federal-funding-bicycle-infrastructure>