

ACTION FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT (NSW) INC

ANNUAL REPORT - 2004

"After nine years of Labor, public transport is getting worse not better;.....For the millions of us packed in tight, the Government has not lived up to its side of the deal". So concluded Adele Horin in her opinion piece "Carr's transport strategy goes off the rails" in the Sydney Morning Herald (SMH) of 27 November 2004, and APT agrees.

TRANSPORT POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

During 2004 APT continued to deal with the aftermath of the reports of the "Parry" and "Unsworth" transport inquiries. We also made submissions to a number of other major government inquiries, including the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's annual fares review (3 submissions), and those concerning Taxis, Concession Fares Policy, and the M4 East Motorway proposal. We also successfully responded to various Development Applications where excessive car parking provisions, or the interests of transit users and pedestrians were threatened.

Despite Local Government's opportunities to play a role in public transport provision, nothing was heard on the subject in the lead-up to the LG elections on 27 March 2004. Information outlining the role local government can play in public transport can be found on our website. In June, the Federal Government released its \$12 billion "Auslink" land transport plan. A logical consequence, the proposed rail line for containers to and from Port Botany, has since degenerated into a wrangling match. There was never any support in the plan for urban public transport. A Melbourne council has noted that Australia is the only Western nation where the national government makes no contribution to urban public transport (Sydney Morning Herald, 26 Oct 2004). The Federal government did of course contribute to the construction of the Alice Springs - Darwin railway, which opened on 15 January 2004.

Following the collapse of its "Action for Transport 2010" plan, the NSW state government called for public discussion on its new "Metropolitan Strategy". The process was so severely criticised from all directions that APT did not bother making a submission. Nor has there been any public consultation, as promised by the government, on the introduction of the public transport "smartcard" ticket, due to be launched for public trial in early 2005.

TRAINS

The new CityRail timetable in July 2004 saw huge cuts in train services, especially on weekends. The definition of a "late" train was relaxed from three minutes to five minutes. From 1 January 2004 the former State Rail Authority became RailCorp. The Independent Transport Safety and Reliability Regulator took effect from the same date. A new statutory body, the Transport Advisory Group (TAG) replaced the former Public Transport Advisory Council (PTAC). The Transport Safety Advisory Committee (TSAC), which includes a representative from APT, will now report to ITSRR.

The findings of the inquiry into the Waterfall train crash were released on 15 January 2004. The Commissioner found that the safety warnings from the previous Glenbrook accident, four years before, had not been addressed. Some senior RailCorp managers were sacked and the need for improved train safety somehow became associated with slowing trains. The NSW premier conceded that there was not necessarily any link, but draft timetables for September 2005 still propose a slowing of trains across the board. APT developed a proposal, referred to as our "Demonstration Project", which would have actually speeded up train services on the Illawarra Line. We hoped that it might have improved the government's image and bolstered staff morale but it has received a cool reception. APT test-rode the new Australian-designed "Austrans" automated (driverless) people mover at Chullora in February.

BUSES

The final report of the "Unsworth" review of NSW bus services was released in February. It addressed the differences in service quality levels between "private" and government bus services. It was supposed to find ways to make buses a viable alternative to the private car, but was thwarted at the outset, any recommendations being required to be at no additional cost. Sydney's North-West Transitway was approved, but won't be operational till 2007.

FERRIES

Sydney's government-owned ferry services were transferred from the State Transit Authority to the new Sydney Ferries Corporation from July 1. For the first time, APT's representation on a government advisory panel, the corporation's Working Group, was enshrined in legislation. Graeme Taylor represents APT on this panel.

ROADS

The construction of public-transport-destroying motorways continues apace in Sydney, with the government strongly favouring a new M4 East motorway to connect Strathfield with the city. APT continues to support the community opposition to this radial freeway, the concept of which was outmoded decades ago. APT's response appears on our website. A federally sponsored study has recommended a new motorway connecting the F3 and the M7 by a tunnel generally parallel with Pennant Hills Road.

APT contributed to, and continues to monitor, City Council's proposals for beautifying its "Gateway" roads, including Oxford Street and Broadway. Council generally recognises and encourages public transport but the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) strenuously defends the need to maintain the existing traffic capacity of such roads, often at the expense of bus passengers' convenience.

From 1 November 2003 the legal default urban speed limit was reduced from 60 to 50 km/h, a significant step, assuming reasonable compliance, toward improved pedestrian safety and lower-impact car crashes. During the year, the RTA toyed with a parking-on-footpaths experiment in Balmain.

MEDIA

APT office-bearers actively promoted our policies in all media during the year, with many editors directly seeking our alternative views to those of the big newsmakers. A small record was set in March, when three APT spokesmen were quoted in three separate articles in the same newspaper.

INSIDE APT

APT would like to formally acknowledge valuable assistance from transport professionals and the general public during 2004. You know who you are.

During 2004 we passed a thirty year milestone of activity. The "Sydney Morning Herald" of 2 August 1974 reported that several hundred people had attended a "Save Public Transport Rally" in Hyde Park the previous day. It precipitated the Save Public Transport Committee, forerunner of APT. APT Treasurer Allan Miles has continued to chair State Transit's customer council, the Inner Metropolitan Transport Forum. We have maintained a record of news items and APT activities on our website at <http://www.aptnsw.org.au/>. Thanks to a good response

from our September member survey we are developing an internet-based newsletter which we hope will provide information about our activities in a time-efficient way.

A new umbrella group, the Greater Sydney Transport Coalition has been formed. APT is a foundation member.

At the APT Annual General Meeting on 5 November 2004, the following management committee was elected. Convener; Kevin Eadie, Secretary; Jim Donovan, Treasurer; Allan Miles, and committee members NS, Ian Jones, Graeme Taylor and Guy Tranter. The financial statements tabled at that meeting will form part of this report for APT members only.

Kevin Eadie,

Convener,

19 September 2005