

## Yarra Campaign Against the Tunnel (YCAT)



### **Submission in response to *Investing in Transport East- West Link Needs Assessment (Eddington Study) July 2008***

#### **Preamble**

---

We, the citizens of the City of Yarra, recognise the need for a change of paradigm for Melbourne's transport planning. Decades of favouring road infrastructure have combined with neglect of the rail transport system to create heavy traffic congestion and pollution, particularly in the inner suburbs.

In the outer suburbs of Melbourne, there is very high dependence on cars as the primary mode of transportation. This places a high economic burden on many low-income households who have few transport choices. This situation will worsen rapidly as oil scarcity forces global prices to continue their steep rise. Car dependency also contributes to ill health and obesity through lack of exercise, particularly among children.

Greenhouse gas emissions from transport are growing rapidly, contributing to global warming and risking extreme climate change. Climate change is already having disastrous effects in Australia, most obviously in the ten-year drought, which threatens Melbourne's water supply and the very health of the Murray- Darling river system. Around the world, climate change is also showing severe effects. Australia's Pacific Islands neighbours, including atoll nations such as Kiribati, are already trying to negotiate plans for evacuation of their citizens as climate refugees.

The dominance of road based passenger and freight transport in Melbourne's transport planning must be reversed as a matter of extreme urgency in order to reduce greenhouse emissions and to secure environmental sustainability, social equity and good health.

**WE FORCEFULLY OPPOSE THE PROPOSED ROAD TUNNEL.**

**THE GOVERNMENT MUST INVEST IN RAIL SERVICES TO THE OUTER SUBURBS, PARTICULARLY THE RAIL LINE TO DONCASTER.**

## **East- West Link Needs Assessment (Eddington Study)**

---

Given the critical need to reorient Melbourne's transport use towards a more sustainable model, the East- West Link Needs Assessment (EWLNA) is profoundly disappointing. While the EWLNA does acknowledge the importance of public transport and rail freight, its priority is to advocate for more expensive road projects, such as the \$10 billion East- West tunnel.

### **The East- West Tunnel**

Of great concern are the conclusions drawn by the report team regarding the need for East- West travel links. The data provided by the study's principal consultants indicates that most "East- West" traffic is actually bound for the city. It is very clear that congestion on the Eastern Freeway is primarily due to city- bound commuter traffic from the Eastern suburbs, not East- West through traffic. The Study's Recommendation 4 (that an \$18 km East- West tunnel needs to be built) is not a logical interpretation of the available data on Melbourne's transport patterns and seems to rest on a pre-existing commitment to a major road project.

The proposed East- West toll road and tunnel will not address the needs of city- bound travellers and indeed will worsen traffic congestion in the inner city and across Melbourne by generating more road- based travel and entrenching car dependency. We do not accept the Study's reassurances that the road tunnel will remove traffic from the inner city; rather, it is clear that the tunnel project will ensure that more and more traffic uses Alexandra Parade and Princes St as well as Hoddle St.

The assumption that building more roads can solve congestion is not supported by any evidence and is directly contradicted by Melbourne's experience with CityLink and other roads projects. Many submissions to the Eddington Study have drawn attention to the link between road building and increased traffic congestion. The EWLNA itself anticipates that Eastern Freeway traffic volumes will grow by 10% as a result of Eastlink and even envisages the need to widen the Eastern Freeway as part of the road tunnel project. A road- based approach does not represent a credible basis for transport planning and lacks community support, yet it underpins the arguments for the road based aspects of the EWLNA.

### ***Localised Effects***

We are also deeply concerned about the effects of building such a tunnel on local communities and environments across the metropolis. In the inner city, we anticipate that these effects will be severe in terms of increased congestion and pollution, with detrimental effects on the health and amenity of residents. Additional traffic generated by the increased investment in roads will create further pressures on Hoddle St and we are very concerned about any plans to widen Hoddle St or other. Across the proposed tollway route, individuals will have their houses requisitioned to allow construction, or suffer a loss of resale value. We are very concerned about other damage to houses in the area as a result of construction works. There may be further loss of heritage buildings and amenity. In the outer Western suburbs, economic inequalities will be amplified as communities who lack workable public transport services again miss out and are forced to rely on cars for mobility.

The EWLNA misrepresents car dependency as some kind of commuter choice but, in fact, car dependency is a result of historic neglect, which ensures that outer suburbs residents have no transport options. Loss of parkland and open space is an unacceptable outcome of the proposed tunnel project. Parks and other open spaces are essential for the health and amenity of urban communities and are also critical in addressing the "heat- island" effects of cities, which also contribute to global warming. The tunnel project represents a threat to major parklands such as Royal Park, essential recreational areas such as Brimbank Park, Debney Park and Holland Park, as well as other smaller reserves and facilities such as the iconic Fitzroy Pool. We declare our intention to preserve these essential amenities against any encroachments.

### ***Financial Benefits?***

We note that the tunnel proposal has a very low cost- benefit ratio and therefore cannot be considered to be worth the expenditure involved. This profligate use of public money cannot be justified when there are credible alternatives, which would deliver much higher benefits.

## **Public Transport Upgrades**

We agree with the Eddington report that there is an urgent need to upgrade the public transport system by maximising rail capacity (Recommendation 3); enforcing tram and bus priority across Melbourne (Recommendation 8); and seeking federal funding for urban transport projects (Recommendation 17), although we only support federal funding of public transport, not roads. We also support the need for improved commuter cycling facilities (Recommendation 7). However, the report does not address the need to extend rail services to outer suburbs, beyond the creation of the Tarneit line and electrification of the Sunbury line.

### ***Doncaster Rail and Feeder Buses***

We believe that building the Doncaster rail line deserves a much higher priority as do new lines to Melton, Rowville, Aurora and Mernda and the other rail improvements recommended in the Metropolitan Transport Forum's *Most Liveable and Most Connected?* We dispute the Study's dismissive analysis of a rail line to Doncaster along the Eastern Freeway rail reserve, not least because it substitutes long bus journeys for the preferred model of buses feeding into heavy rail services.

The EWLNA's support of park and ride facilities is also highly questionable as this is a much less effective means of providing access to public transport than feeder bus links, together with improved bicycle facilities at stations and on trains. Land around railway stations is far too valuable to waste on car parking and station car parks are often used by non-commuters. Bus links to rail services are much more environmentally responsible and socially equitable because they cater for travellers who do not own cars.

### ***Rail Tunnel?***

While the Eddington report does recommend substantial funding for public transport, this is concentrated in a Footscray to Caulfield tunnel project, which appears to duplicate existing surface rail infrastructure. This proposed rail tunnel is not clearly linked to any expansion of the rail system into the outer suburbs, which we believe to be the highest priority for investment in rail infrastructure. The rationale for this particular project appears to be based on a misrepresentation of current rail capacity.

We believe this to be a subterfuge employed by an inefficient private operator (Connex) to explain its extremely poor performance while continuing its profit-maximising practices. It is regrettable that the supposed "capacity constraints" of the rail network have been accepted unquestioningly by the Department of Transport: the only quoted source for the Eddington Report's public transport recommendations. We believe an independent and critical consultant should have been engaged for this part of the report, as was the case for the road-based analysis.

The past performance of the rail system indicates that there is sufficient capacity on the lines to allow far more passenger journeys than are currently provided. Indeed, while the EWLNA argues at one point that rail capacity has been reached, the Third recommendation (that capacity improvements be implemented immediately) gives an indication that the Study is not entirely convinced by its own arguments and that there is indeed considerable under utilisation of existing rail infrastructure.

Furthermore, if past practices of Victorian Governments are any guide, we are deeply sceptical that any of the public transport projects of the Eddington report will be built at all. Too often lip service is given to public transport while the real priority and resources are allocated to roads. In Victoria, this is usually dressed up as "balanced" or "integrated" transport planning and indeed this language appears frequently in the EWLNA discussion of road transport! In this context, recommendation of the \$10 billion rail tunnel may be seen as primarily political in motivation rather than as a serious proposal.

We believe that the rail tunnel is a decoy project intended to show the "balance" of the Eddington report. However, we suspect that, like the Doncaster rail line, the Footscray- Caulfield tunnel will be promised but never built. Instead, we urge the Government to commence work on new rail lines to Doncaster, Rowville and other outer suburbs.

### ***Institutional reform***

We also demand reform of the Department of Transport along the lines recommended by Paul Mees, so that it is more efficient and capable of delivering first class public transport to all of Melbourne. We also urge the Government to return the operation of rail services to public control and to abandon the dysfunctional Myki ticketing system.

The EWLNA recommends two institutional reforms which we see as counter-productive: shifting responsibility for rail freight to the Port of Melbourne (Recommendation 12) and creating a statutory body to oversee delivery of the East- West tunnel projects (Recommendation 20). Both of the recommendations run counter to the principle of centralised planning and are likely to contribute to current problems of fragmentary management of rail infrastructure of services. The responsibilities envisaged in these recommendations belong as a direct responsibility of Government and should be made more accountable and representative. Delegation to statutory bodies is not likely to improve the transparency and participation required.

## **Climate Change and Peak Oil**

---

The EWLNA acknowledges the seriousness of climate change but believes that this is beyond the scope of its terms of reference. It would have been better to ask for an amendment of the terms of reference than to proceed with recommendations on Melbourne's transport future, which do not have reducing greenhouse emissions as a primary goal. While greater fuel efficiency is desirable (Recommendations 15 and 16), it is naïve to hope that this will provide the scale of change required to reduce emissions from transport, particularly in the context of further road- building projects, which are certain to generate much more traffic.

Climate change is becoming ever more urgent and requires a substantial reorientation of priorities on behalf of government and society in order to move to a low carbon economy. Transport planning is critical in this regard. The Eddington Study recognises the importance of public transport, walking and cycling in reducing emissions but fails to commit to reduction of car use. We reject the study's scepticism regarding behavioural change.

Melburnians are clearly changing their transport behaviours in response to environmental concerns and against poor performance by the private operators of public transport services. We believe Government should take a strong role in discouraging car use through: provision of excellent public transport services and cycling infrastructure; a moratorium on new roads; demand- management measures such as street closures, shared zones and reduction of parking spaces; public education and restrictions on advertising of cars. Provision of services to communities without public transport access is the critical factor in overcoming the "choice" of drivers to use their cars.

### ***Peak Oil***

As with climate change, there is some discussion of the issue of peak oil but this does not shape the planning decisions within the recommendations. Again, an issue of such magnitude cannot be left to technological innovation but requires governments to take active measures to reduce car dependency. In Melbourne this is an issue of social equity as housing affordability has forced many low income earners to new suburbs on the fringes of the city with poor transport services. The EWLNA assumes that rates of car use will remain high for the foreseeable future. We believe this assumption is incorrect and road- building decisions will abandon some of Melbourne's poorest citizens to increasing economic and social disadvantage.

## **Conclusion**

---

The EWLNA is a profound disappointment and cannot be used as a model for transport planning in Melbourne. The road- building orientation of the Study is totally unacceptable and fails to redress the imbalances of resource allocation and planning, which have led to Melbourne's current transport problems. Many alternative views, based on mainstream planning practice in Australia and in other developed countries, were considered and rejected by the Study.

As citizens, we find this deeply disturbing as it indicates that the entire EWLNA was biased towards a predetermined outcome from the very beginning. Rather than meeting Melbourne's transport challenges, the recommendations of the Study will create immense disruption and deliver more congestion, pollution and carbon emissions. The Study's recommendations will waste resources that urgently need to be applied to making Melbourne a low carbon city with low car use.

The EWLNA fails to address the key issues surrounding transport: reduction of greenhouse emissions; reduction of oil dependency; provision of sustainable transport infrastructure and services to all communities across Melbourne. We urge the Government to begin work on a new transport plan, which commits to these aims and places a moratorium on construction of new roads.

## **WE COMPREHENSIVELY REJECT THE ROAD TUNNEL PROPOSAL**