



Don't miss the bus, Mr Rudd

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This is a guest post from Community Action for Sustainable Transport Inc

Reducing the fuel excise and Federal investment in roads will not make travel affordable.

This is the message coming from a coalition of more than 20 transport and environmental groups who have signed off on an open letter to PM Kevin Rudd (see below), urging the Federal government to invest heavily in public transport to reduce the impacts of rising petrol prices.

“The Federal government’s urban transport priority must be to create a public transport system that takes people where they need to go, when they need to be there. More than anything else we need better alternatives to the car,” said Tristan Peach, spokesperson for Community Action for Sustainable Transport QLD (CAST).

“Providing better public transport for people in Ipswich, the Gold Coast, Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast means they will spend less on fuel, and households may not have to own a second or third car,” said Mr Peach.

“The Federal government are mad to be pouring money into the Northern Link tunnel and the Ipswich Motorway at a time when driving is becoming even more expensive,” said Mr Peach.

“This money should go into assisting the state government to duplicate and extend rail lines, provide increased public transport frequencies, more cross-city and outer suburban bus services and substantial lengths of dedicated cycling and walking infrastructure. These are the priorities,” said Mr Peach.

“A weekly ticket for unlimited public transport travel within 30km of the Brisbane CBD costs \$40. Now that is affordable travel. We just need a public transport system that meets the needs of more people so they can benefit from these huge savings,” said Mr Peach.

Members of the public who want to send a message to the Federal Government about public transport can fill out an online form at GetUp which will be forwarded to their Federal MP - <http://www.getup.org.au/campaign/FixTransport&id=355>

The Queensland Conservation Council also signed off on the open letter.

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The Hon Kevin Rudd MP
Prime Minister
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

15 July 2008

Dear Prime Minister

OPEN LETTER – AN EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE RESPONSE TO RISING FUEL PRICES

Australians are becoming more and more worried about the cost of petrol. Until now many of us have acted as if petrol would always be cheap and abundant, however it is becoming increasingly clear that this is not the case. We must now reassess our transport options, and look at how we can use energy more efficiently. The time is ripe for real solutions like fast, frequent, reliable and accessible public transport.

It is clear that global oil supply cannot keep up with projected growth in demand, and this can only mean higher and higher oil prices. Rather than debating responses that only offer minor and temporary relief at best, such as reducing the cost of fuel, we need to find ways to reduce our need for petrol and support those who are genuinely most vulnerable.

We also know that we must confront the threat of runaway climate change, and that time is fast running out if we are to ensure a safe climate for our children. Because of climate change we cannot afford the cost of dirty fuels like shale oil or coal-to-liquid fuel. Our nation's energy security must be based on reducing our energy needs, underpinned by the provision of real and lasting transport alternatives.

A big part of the answer is public transport. Many families living outside the centres of our cities are forced to own and use multiple cars at great expense because public transport services are currently inadequate. The vast majority would like to play a part in reducing emissions and cut fuel costs but are reluctant to use public transport services that are too slow, have long waiting times and are unreliable. If public transport services were improved to provide a time-competitive alternative to car use, many people would be able to change their mode of transport, and escape rising petrol prices.

This would not just save a few cents per litre, but the full cost of petrol and tolls. With viable alternatives, many households would no longer need a second or third car, and could also save on registration, insurance, interest and other fixed costs. Instead of saving a dollar or two a week with slightly cheaper petrol, Australian families could save thousands of dollars each year while also reducing congestion and greenhouse gas pollution.

Mr Rudd, we ask your government to take urgent steps to invest in expanding the reach and quality of public transport in urban, regional and rural Australia. We ask you to work together with State and Territory governments to provide better quality public transport services that will provide a real alternative to the car. In closing we also ask you to ensure that Australian families and the climate do not have to wait too long.



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