



**THE HON ANTHONY ALBANESE MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE, TRANSPORT, CITIES AND
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
SHADOW MINISTER FOR TOURISM
MEMBER FOR GRAYNDLER**

SPEECH TO 2018 AUSTRALASIA BUS CONFERENCE

CAIRNS

TUESDAY, 9 OCTOBER 2018

###CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY###

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for the invitation to address the 2018 Australasia Bus Industry Conference.

It is always a pleasure to speak at a Bus Industry Confederation event – an organisation that plays an instrumental role in advocating for the bus and coach sector.

Indeed, your sector has always been well organised.

This is partly because it is so well represented at a national level through the hard work of people like Michael Apps and Wayne Patch, who play a leading role in the bipartisan Better Cities Group.

Your engagement across all levels of government and with other industry organisations has become even more important as we progress through the 21st century – a time of monumental change that has affected the way we live, work and play.

Perhaps the most significant change occurred in 2008, when I was serving as the nation's first ever Infrastructure Minister.

This is when the World Bank confirmed that for the first time ever, the world's population tipped over to become more urban than rural.

It's a trajectory that has and will continue.

By 2050, the world is expected to become 70 per cent urban.

And, here in Australia, our urban population is one of the fastest growing in the OECD.

Managing this growth requires a safe and efficient public transport system.

As you know through your work, our public transport network underpins the movement of people in cities and towns across the nation.

Buses are an integral part of this network, providing jobs for the more than 42,900 people who work as bus and coach drivers, while ensuring we all reach our destination.

Indeed, since the last census, bus use has increased in Australia with more than 320,000 people in 2016 using buses to travel to work.

With the right investment, I'm confident that more and more Australians will

choose public transport as their preferred means of travel.

But we must also recognise that the transport sector is susceptible to disruption and that there will be significant changes in the decades to come.

That's why this conference's focus on future mobility, connectivity and technology in the bus and coach sector is so important.

We can't stop change.

But we can make it work for us.

LABOR'S RECORD

When people ask what a future Labor Government would do, I point them to our strong track record of investing in towns and cities across the nation.

As well as establishing institutions such as Infrastructure Australia and the Major Cities Unit to break the nexus between the three or four year electoral cycle and the much longer investment cycle, the former Federal Labor Government also:

- Restored national leadership by appointing Australia's first ever Federal Infrastructure Minister and the creation of a Federal Infrastructure Department;
 - Built and upgraded 7,500 kilometres of road including completing the duplication of the Hume Highway, accelerating the upgrade of the Pacific Highway to dual carriageway, and improving the safety and flood immunity of hundreds of kilometres of the Bruce;
 - Rebuilt a third of the interstate rail freight network – some 4,000 kilometres of track; and
 - Committed more funding to urban public transport than all our predecessors since Federation combined.
-

It's this record that will provide the template for what we will do the next time.

In short, there will be two key elements to Labor's infrastructure agenda for the nation.

Firstly, if we are to maximise its economic, social and environmental dividends, infrastructure policy has to be got right – and that starts with a genuine commitment to a long term strategy based on an objective, evidence-based assessment of the nation's infrastructure needs.

In practice that will involve returning Infrastructure Australia's to the centre of the government's decision making process – and respecting it's advice.

To that end, we will provide it with the resources it needs to perform its core functions, including assessing projects, producing an infrastructure pipeline and recommending financing mechanisms.

The importance of having an effective Infrastructure Australia cannot be overstated.

Secondly, we will reverse the projected decline in Federal investment and provide real funding to the real projects that have been identified and properly assessed by a re-empowered Infrastructure Australia.

Not only will we proceed with all the new projects announced in the 2018 Budget, we will add to them to create a more ambitious capital works program, particularly in the area of urban public transport.

This includes Brisbane's Cross River Rail and Sydney's Western Metro.

Labor understands that as one of the most urbanised nations on the planet, Australia's continued prosperity will largely depend on how successful we are at

making our cities work better.

And that demands investment in both their road and rail infrastructure.

MOBILITY

It is highly relevant that we are in Cairns today.

Our regional cities and towns, in particular, grapple with the challenge of mobility and an ageing population.

Low volume markets may not produce the same return as high volume markets in capital cities, but they are just as important.

We need to ensure people have access to services, supermarkets and each other.

This strengthens communities and breaks down social isolation.

The value of regional bus operators cannot be overestimated.

We must continue to support them and recognise the fundamental role these bus operators play in the viability of our regional economies, supporting the health and access opportunities of people living in regional Australia.

But mobility is not just important for those living in regional communities – it also matters for visitors.

Coach travel is enjoyed by almost half a million international tourists and more than 1.5 million domestic travellers.

Just look at the thousands of tourists travelling by bus between Cairns and Port

Douglas or from their hotel to activities.

Tourism is a super-growth sector for Australia, but regional dispersal remains one of our greatest challenges.

We need to consider how we can improve coach access in our cities and regions so that visitors can be more easily transported from hubs like airports or cruise terminals to tourist destinations across the country.

I am familiar with the national strategy for regional land transport tourism that the Bus Industry Confederation has developed and I commend you for your contribution to this important policy debate.

CONNECTIVITY

The bus and coach sector are also essential when it comes to ensuring effective urban connectivity.

Recently, the Committee on Infrastructure, Transport and Cities released the 'Building Up and Moving Out' report.

While I don't agree with all the recommendations, the report makes an important contribution to the nation's ongoing debate about how to best manage population growth in our cities.

Of particular significance to this conference is recommendation 11, which focuses on the need for cities to have an efficient public transport network.

It suggests that governments should collaborate to 'embrace innovation', create a 'more sustainable model of urban transport connectivity' and 'promote investment in the development of a public transport network capable of meeting the goal of a 30 minute city.'

Just like the Bus Industry Confederation, I am also an advocate of the 30 minute city, and of course buses are part of this equation.

The current Federal Government talks a lot about 'congestion-busting'.

Adopting this recommendation and investing in public transport infrastructure, rather than just talking about it, would make a very real difference.

Our cities can't afford more rhetoric – our cities need their national government to take action.

Keeping the wheels turning, literally, so that cities continue to perform as economic powerhouses is one of our biggest challenges.

Traffic congestion is already costing the national economy \$16 billion a year in lost productivity.

And, according to analysis by Infrastructure Australia, this cost will rise to \$53 billion a year by 2031 unless we act now.

But it's not just about lost productivity; it's also about quality of life.

Because most job creation has been in inner areas, growth in population has been in outer communities there has been disconnect between where people work and where people live.

This has led to the development of drive-in drive-out suburbs, where people spend more time commuting to and from work than they do at home with their families.

TECHNOLOGY

The truth is that technology will assist us in overcoming some of our urban challenges.

Technology has facilitated the greater use of bus lanes, which have in turn led to express routes.

These have the added advantage of reminding motorists sitting in traffic of the advantage of taking the bus as it goes past them.

The Managed Motorways Program, which Labor initiated and invested significantly in, is a great example of incorporating intelligent transport solutions into urban motorway networks.

These included entry ramp signalling, variable speed limit signs, CCTVs and digital message signs that provide motorists with live updates on traffic conditions and delays.

But technology is also disruptive.

We know it will impact the transport sector and, indeed it already has.

This includes the rise of car share, with the introduction of Uber and other, similar companies.

Today in Australia there are 3.8 million regular Uber riders and 62,000 active driver-partners.

The taxi industry has, understandably, resisted Uber.

But that has made no difference. The share economy is driven by the Internet, which makes regulation difficult.

But these changes still require a government response.

As Stephen Hawking said, “we are not going to stop making progress or reverse it, so we must recognise the dangers and control them”.

In addition to recognising dangers, we should also be looking at how we can make these advancements in technology work for us.

Not just for some of us, but for all of us.

Automation is one area where this will be key.

Research from the Committee for Economic Development of Australia indicates that up to five million jobs could be affected by automation by 2030.

Governments need to be forward thinking about how to best manage this change.

If it is managed well, the changing nature of work has the potential to improve the quality of life of people, especially those who work in the transport industry with new, high-skilled and well paid jobs.

But if managed poorly, the gap between the haves and have nots will only widen.

And as Michael Cannon-Brookes, co-founder of Atlassian, told a recent Senate Inquiry on this very issue, “hope is not a tactic”.

We need to actively and genuinely pursue a strategy aimed at ensuring those people who will be displaced by new technology have the skills they need for the jobs of the future.

The fact is that the Federal Government's cuts to vocational education actively undermine our ability to achieve this.

Investment and leadership from the national government is critical.

So too, is collaboration.

Tackling issues such as automated transport offers a great opportunity for genuine collaboration between governments, employers and trade unions in an area that is undeniably in their common interest.

Over the past ten years as the Minister and Shadow Minister for Transport I have regularly met with transport workers.

The passion transport workers have for their industry is obvious and it is this passion that is so important as we plan for the future of work.

This type of planning is currently underway in Singapore, which has launched its 'Land Transport Industry Transformation Map'.

This strategy seeks to leverage emerging technology to improve the land transport system, grow productivity and enhance the commuter experience, while also future-proofing the workforce through up-skilling and re-skilling programs.

For the bus and coach sector there are a number of opportunities in this space.

The truth is mass transit will always have a role to play.

We will always want to reduce congestion, not grow it by having more cars on the road – automated or not.

Dedicated bus lanes can carry 8,000 people an hour.

In contrast, cars can only move less than 1,000 people each hour.

Your sector is already talking about what other opportunities might exist.

For example, Michael Apps in his comments to the Senate Inquiry into cities observed that automation could enable buses to compete directly with rail.

He said, “Autonomy is going to drive a whole different outcome ... platooning bus seats, or platooning vehicles that operate on a dedicated route but have the capacity to hive off to service individual suburbs...”

As many of you know, platooning is an application of automated driving technology that uses wireless communications to allow two or more vehicles to safely travel closer together.

While travelling in a platoon, the lead vehicle communicates with following vehicles, sending commands about when and how to undertake steering, acceleration and braking.

As well as improving safety, these systems will reduce costs of fuel consumption, in turn reducing pollution.

Vehicle platooning in both passenger and freight applications is projected to reduce fuel consumption by as much as 20 per cent.

That's important.

Sixteen per cent of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions come from cars.

And transport emissions have the highest rate of growth.

Electric vehicles will help reduce emissions.

In Australia this is already being done.

Adelaide has updated its O-Bahn Busway to include a number of electric buses.

The Australian company tasked with manufacturing these buses, Tindo, has since been contracted to produce additional buses across Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.

In great news, this has required the company to expand its staff from 29 to 79.

This highlights additional opportunities in manufacturing, which is significant considering Australia's vibrant bus manufacturing sector.

CONCLUSION

The Bus Industry Confederation is right to highlight mobility, connectivity and technology as its key pillars.

As the nation's demographics shift and as advancements in technology continue to gather pace technology will shape the way people access services and connect to their community.

Government should work with the sector to ensure that this change is constructive and that the worst potential consequences of disruption and automation are avoided.

For my part, I am committed to working with each of you to ensure that the bus and coach sector remains strong.

This is particularly important given its crucial role in underpinning the success of Australia's cities and towns.

TUESDAY, 9 OCTOBER 2018
