

## **BIC COLUMN JULY 2008**

### **PM Rudd calls for Better Public Transport – But Rhetoric Needs to Turn into ACTION**

In encouraging news for the industry, the media hype surrounding the issue of skyrocketing fuel prices has drawn some very significant recognition of the relationship between fuel prices and increasing public transport patronage from none other than the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd.

In an interview with the Nine Network the PM called for “for some decent, decent public transport systems, invested in by the national government across our major cities so people don't burn their petrol prices on the way to work.”

While the phrasing was a little mangled the intention was clear, the PM recognises the need for the Federal Government involvement in public transport to ensure commuters, regardless of their proximity to urban and regional centres are presented with a real alternative to the car for their work trips.

In an interview with Greg Cery the PM signalled improving public transport and increasing capacity as a part of a long-term strategy for tackling rising fuel prices:

“...third is this, fuel efficient cars, how do we encourage that longer term? And on top of that, what do we do in terms of alternative fuel strategy as well? And the last one, I think, is what do you do in addition to make sure we've got a decent, credible, public transport system for Australia, and that's where we have a real problem.”

BIC's lobbying, growing from the initial call for Federal Government funding is increasingly focused on ensuring that when the Federal Government does get involved in public transport they are aware of short, medium and long-term policy approaches to public transport.

Now is not the time to rest on our laurels as an industry, we need to make sure our Federal Parliamentarians are aware of the dire need for better public transport systems as part of the solution to climate change, traffic congestion and rising fuel prices.

As part of our efforts to ensure that Federal funding goes into public transport infrastructure and planning projects that meet increased service demand and address “black holes” in access to public transport the BIC has met with the Prime Minister's office, the Minister's office and several outer-metropolitan backbenchers to deliver the industry's key messages.

The next few months will be crucial as we head towards the start of the budgeting process for 2009, where the beans are counted and the Government decides where the money from funding pools like the Building Australia Fund and AusLink goes.

Now would be an opportune time to get in contact with your local MP and use your unique position as a public transport service provider in your area to make sure your views are heard.

**THE GOVERNMENT IS LISTENING – IT'S TIME TO LET THEM KNOW.**

### **National Tourism Accreditation Framework – National Standards for Tour and Coach Operators**

As part of our lobbying activities for the long distance, express and charter sectors of the industry the BIC has been participating in the consultation phase of the development of a National Tourism Accreditation Framework.

The Minister for Energy, Resources and Tourism, the Hon Martin Ferguson, said the development of this framework was geared towards improving the Australian tourism experience, something that the tour operators within our industry will be glad to hear.

It's early days in the process, but the BIC has been meeting with the department and has written to the Minister to make sure the bus industry plays a part in the development of these standards and that any National Accreditation system for tourism takes into accounts the management, service and vehicle standards of tourism providers.

At this stage it appears that the Framework will be based on standards developed by the industry.

The BIC has established a Long Distance, Charter and Express Committee in late 2007 to deal with issues like the National Tourism Accreditation Framework. To keep up to date with the activities of this group and to have your say on issues that affect you as an operator belonging to that sector of the industry email [admin@bic.asn.au](mailto:admin@bic.asn.au) or call us on (02) 6247 5990.

### **Industrial Relations – National Employment Standards**

As promised by the ALP during the election campaign, and according to research one of the key reasons why the Rudd Government was elected, a new industrial relations environment is being developed.

This new industrial relations system, Forward with Fairness, is being delivered in two stages. The first is the development of a set of National Employment Standards (NES); the second is the award modernisation process.

Bus industry State Associations have formed an Industrial Relations Working Group to help the industry meet its requirements under the new industrial relations system. The BIC is facilitating the process by taking a secretarial role.

As promised the Rudd Government released the NES this month. The NES, to take effect from January 1, 2010 is in effect a minimum set of standards that apply to all employees and modern awards will all have to meet the ten standards established by the Rudd Government.

The NES can be modified in an award, but cannot be detrimental to an employee compared to the NES.

The NES provides ten protections for employees in the following areas:

- Maximum weekly hours of work
- Request for flexible working arrangements
- Parental leave and related entitlements
- Annual leave
- Personal/carer's leave and compassionate leave
- Long service leave
- Public holidays
- Notice of termination and redundancy pay
- Fair Work Information Statement

Legislation will be introduced into Parliament later this year to give effect to the standards. The legislation will include other aspects of workplace relations relating to the NES including compliance, interaction with agreement making and future reviews.

To view the full set of National Employment Standards and their explanations go to [www.workplace.gov.au](http://www.workplace.gov.au).

### **New arrangements for Fuel Tax Credits – Be informed, save \$\$\$**

Under new arrangements to the Fuel Tax Credits Scheme you are eligible to claim back fuel tax credits on all petrol and diesel fuel used for business purposes.

Under the new system ALL vehicles above 4.5 tonnes GVM, travelling on a public road are eligible to claim Fuel Tax Credits of 18.51 cents per litre.

Fuel in specified activities such as agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining, marine and rail transport, electricity generation and non-fuel uses that have been eligible since 1 July 2006 can be claimed at 38.143 cents per litre.

Fuel used in other activities, machinery, plant and equipment, such as a wide range of construction, wholesale, retail, property, management and landscaping activities can be claimed at 19.0715 cents per litre

Vehicles and machinery eligible for fuel tax credits under the new arrangements include asphalt pavers, backhoes, blower vacuums, cranes, drills, lawn mowers, off road motorbikes and whipper-snippers. Pretty much anything that uses fuel and is used in your business.

For further details visit the ATO website [www.ato.gov.au](http://www.ato.gov.au) make sure you're receiving your full entitlements under the Fuel Tax Credit Scheme.

With changes mooted for the rebate under the Fuel Tax Credits Scheme in 2009, now's the time to save money for your business.