

## **BIC COLUMN – March 2013**

Here at the BIC we take a “make love not war” approach to our lobbying and advocacy.

The Moving People message and policy we have developed since being established in Canberra is a positive one and this is reflected in our approach to lobbying.

That said there is a point at which we draw the line and the pleasantries have to end.

Recent decisions to go full steam ahead with light rail projects in major cities across Australia have been made without proper consideration for the alternatives available on the same corridor and for the value of spreading investment across the whole transport system.

This has been seen in Canberra, the Sunshine Coast and Tasmania.

In Canberra a balanced view about what type of system to build has turned into building a 13 km light rail at all costs.

In the Sunshine Coast light rail was chosen before the feasibility study was conducted and in Tasmania the Federal Government is being called on to fund a light rail that will only service a small percentage of the state.

The common denominator with all of these projects is that pressure groups are taking control of the process and turning a discussion into how to improve a whole public transport system, into a discussion about specific modes of transport and lifestyle choices. Nothing to do with good outcomes.

Light rail has a natural support base of rail enthusiasts and Greens parties around the country.

The problem is that neither of these groups really cares about the big picture of public transport outcomes in their town, city or state. They just care about the few kilometres of light rail that will come at the expense of services across the system.

Light rail also comes at the expense of other services such as health and education that could receive funding which would otherwise be spent on very expensive light rail systems.

The BIC has drawn the line and will oppose light rail where it is proposed without proper consideration of the costs and benefits, the alternatives available and the impacts across the whole system of investing so heavily in one piece of infrastructure.

This month we have worked with our State counterparts and launched media and advocacy campaigns aimed at highlighting these points to government and the general public.

These are ongoing campaigns and the influence of light rail pressure groups, for example the ACT Greens who hold the balance of power in Canberra and the Tasmanian Greens in a

coalition government in Tasmania, means it won't be easy to reverse these decisions, but we will give it a go.

The BIC is developing a report on rapid transit, based on a study tour of the US and Canada that we undertook last year. This will be presented to the Federal Government and state governments across Australia.

The report will highlight the range of choices for rapid transit available and the benefits they bring so that governments can make rational choices based on evidence.

A session on rapid transit will also feature at the BIC National Conference which is in Adelaide this year from Sunday October 27 to Wednesday 30 October.

We are in the process of developing the program for this year's Conference and they will be available on the Ozebus website [www.ozebus.com.au](http://www.ozebus.com.au) in the coming months.