

## **BIC Column January**

The Commonwealth Government, as is the case with most new Governments, has hit the ground reviewing with a raft of inquiries underway and expected for 2014. This means the BIC is representing the industry in a range of inquiries and policy development processes.

In December the BIC presented a submission to the Productivity Commission Review of Automotive Manufacturing in Australia. While the sound and fury surrounded Holden's decision to leave Australia the BIC outlined what the emerging trends are and why the unique skills set in automotive manufacturing should be retained in Australia.

We are also participating in the policy development process for the Emissions Reduction Fund. This is a key element in the Coalition Government's Direct Action Plan to tackle climate change.

Through our submission and in discussions as part of the policy development process the BIC are making the case for modal shift from cars to public transport to be recognised as a low cost source of abatement. We have also identified the potential for a shift to newer, low emissions buses to be eligible for credits under any carbon credits system. It is early days but the BIC is involved and making sure our industry gets a fair hearing.

While the new Government has divested portfolio responsibilities for tourism to a number of Ministers the BIC is participating in the Australian Tourism Roundtable process which includes input from Ministers in the Government. Through this roundtable we have been encouraging comprehensive research into regional and coach tourism businesses which can form the basis of a land based tourism strategy that encourages inter-regional travel across Australia. The BIC's *Moving People Across Australia* tourism policy statement forms the backbone of our involvement in this roundtable and can be found on the Ozebus website.

2014 will bring even more inquiries and reviews. The BIC is involved in inquiries into the Infrastructure Australia Amendment Bill, public infrastructure, the role of the Commonwealth Government in public transport, heavy vehicle charging and energy security. There is much to do.

What all these inquiries and reviews really mean is that bus industry issues and the idea that the Commonwealth Government has a role in public transport and moving people is still on the agenda in Parliament.

This has been highlighted by the Opposition and Greens highlighting the gap in policy positions between the Coalition Government and ALP Opposition and Greens on the issue of Commonwealth investment in public transport infrastructure.

This issue features regularly as a key "wedge" between the parties and we can expect it to feature strongly during the next election campaign, particularly in outer-metropolitan marginal seats where the proportion of household income that is spent on transport continues to climb.

In his last media release following the announcement of the Mid Year Economic Forecast, former Minister and now Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Anthony Albanese had this to say:

"All of these public transport projects are aimed at clearing city roads of traffic congestion, which not only frustrates commuters, but is also a brake on productivity and jobs growth because it slows the movement of goods and services. Australia's economic health depends on having vibrant cities where people and goods can move freely and where businesses can thrive."

Good policy is good politics and the BIC will be working with the new Government to identify pathways and directions to allow the Coalition Government to take a stronger role in urban transport and cities. Participating in the policy development process through inquiries and reviews and running out the BIC's *Moving People* message is part of how we get there.