



Sustainable Transport Coalition of WA Annual Convenors' Report 2008-09

Brian Baynam and Ben Rose

This has been a year with many transport and energy issues to address. With the oil price rising again to over \$80 per barrel and increasing 'transport poverty' in the ever expanding outer suburbs, there has never been a greater need for a transport advocacy group in Perth. It has also been a year of change within STCWA. The availability of volunteer and funded workers has decreased, which has meant that we have been unable to run major conferences and seminars, but have successfully have maintained the essential lobbying and awareness raising roles.

The Committee gives heartfelt thanks to David Bennett, our founder who has had to retire after 8 years of voluntary service to STCWA. He has filled the roles of convenor, treasurer and professional organizer of several events including last year's 'Fuelling Food in WA' conference. The many uncounted voluntary hours that David has put in for STCWA over the past 8 years are irreplaceable. We wish him all the best in his retirement. Convenor Jeff Pow, and committee member Glen Head have had to resign due to pressures of work and family; their contribution is acknowledged with thanks.

It has been increasingly difficult to find funding and volunteers in these hard economic times and efforts to gain corporate sponsorship have so far been unsuccessful. However, others have moved in to fill gaps in the Committee. We have welcomed retired professional Anne Ross as Treasurer and secondary teacher Sol Hanna as Secretary. Ben Rose has stepped in as deputy convenor. The Committee has resolved to focus on the essential community advocate functions of the Coalition, which are:

- Develop and advocate policy and action for sustainable transport
- Promote community awareness
- Involve people in taking action to make changes
- Research and lobby on issues of concern
- Monitor policy and performance of government
- Network with others, seek support and raise funds

To this end we have focussed our lobbying and awareness raising efforts on what we consider to be the 'big issues' of the day and achieved at least one media article or conference presentation per month. Published articles include 'Low Fares Not All That Public Transport Users Need' (West Australian, June 2009) and 'Need for Shift to Low Carbon Fuels and Rail' (Rail Express and Australian Journal of Mining).

The need for more investment in freight rail has been a major issue this year. We have lobbied Government to retain the grain rail network (STCWA says State can't afford NOT to renovate grain rail- 11 June 2009). With much pressure from local, grower and community groups such as ourselves, the Government finally 'saw the light' and agreed to continue maintenance and upgrading of this network.

During the past year Committee members attended / presented to/ made submissions on behalf of STCWA to:

- *WA Transport and Infrastructure Conference*
- *Senate Select Committee on Fuel and Energy*
- *Senate Select Committee on Public Transport*
- *Good Governance in Transport, Land Use Planning and Transport Infrastructure* Forum, organised by GAMUT (the Australasian Centre for the Governance and Management of Urban Transport).
- Belmont Rotary
- University of WA adult education program
- AFAC forum
- SA Parliament ERDC hearing

David Worth made a presentation on Peak Oil and CPRS impacts at the former conference. David Rice presented the future of the car at an Environment Matters seminar organized by Conservation Council of WA. David Bennett and Ben Rose attended the launch of the Whiteman Park Revolutions exhibition of the history and future challenges of transport in WA and contributed an information brochure to help raise awareness of adults and school groups about sensible transport choices.

The Committee now has a ‘think tank’ mode of operation. Professionals within the group research issues and produce policy statements, media articles and submissions. with editorial input and vetting from the rest of the committee. Most meetings are followed by a presentation by an expert on a current transport issue. The aim is to build on this mode of operation, increasing the expertise of members and making vital information available to the public through our website.

For example, as a contribution to balanced debate on public transport, STCWA produced the ‘Statement on the Role of Light Rail for Perth’. To enlighten the often hazy debates about sustainable development, we have produced ‘A Definition of Sustainability’ and ‘Towards Sustainability’, a ratings system designed to realistically assess whether transport and urban planning projects are really socially, environmentally and economically sustainable and cause no net harm.

The website with its monthly E-newsletter has continued to be STCWA’s primary information channel, available free to the public. Many thanks are due to David Worth for continuing his voluntary commitment to this invaluable resource.

In summary, this has been a difficult year in which STCWA has continued to be effective and productive under difficult conditions. We have had to and will continue to ‘do more with less’. The proposed constitutional changes will enable individuals to become full voting members. It is to be hoped that membership will increase in the coming year and that those with expertise or a passion for transport planning will be encouraged to join the Committee and engage as effective contributors to this exciting arena of development in WA.