

INFRASTRUCTURE

Strain on inner city as sprawl ends

Eryk Bagshaw
Shane Wright

Infrastructure Australia has declared the end of the suburban sprawl across Australia's east coast and warned the biggest challenge facing government will be providing enough inner-city services to cope with the surging population.

The chief executive of the infrastructure regulator, Romilly Madew, said "the 70-year dominance of our urban fringe has ended" and a wave of investment and reform was needed to maintain quality of life.

Speaking ahead of the release of Infrastructure Australia's four-year audit into the country's transport, road and service needs today, Ms Madew said Sydney and Melbourne had shifted from growing new suburbs to building up existing areas over the last two years.

"We are definitely transitioning into inner-urban [areas]," she said. "It's quite clear."



Infrastructure Australia's executive director of policy and research, Peter Colacino, said the audit was "the first time we have really called out that type of growth as the holistic challenge facing cities".

He identified inner-Melbourne and Green Square in Sydney as areas that faced unprecedented levels of growth, as families looked to move closer to services and away from congested travel arteries to and from the outer suburbs.

The audit found that shift was likely to accelerate as commuters grew increasingly frustrated with gridlock on our road and rail networks, which is forecast to cost \$38.8 billion in lost productivity over the next 12 years.

Mr Colacino said population forecasts, which relied on past estimates, were "not hitting the mark".

"Population growth occurring at a higher rate or lower rate means that investment is not well targeted," he said.

The audit found many hospitals and schools had reached capacity or were showing signs of age, requiring the construction of expensive new and upgraded facilities, especially in inner-urban areas.

Compounding the challenge was the lack of green space, turning some concrete-bound city suburbs into "urban heat islands".

The report found some suburbs had temperatures up to 6 degrees higher than elsewhere because of the "heat island" effect.

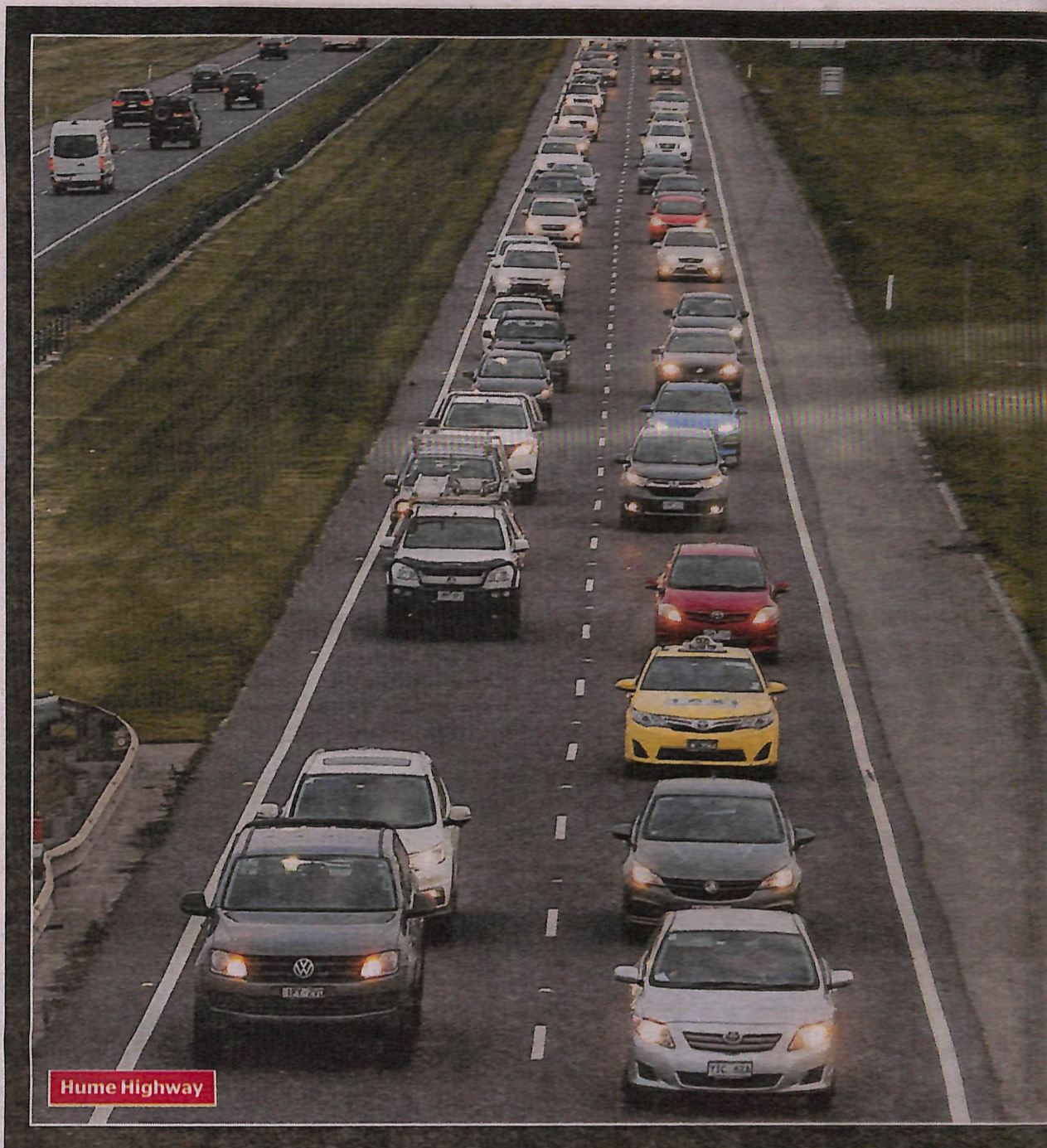
"This is because the heat of the sun is absorbed and not reflected by urban surfaces such as buildings, car parks and roads. Human activities, such as traffic and the use of air conditioning, also increase the waste heat generated."

The effect was particularly noticeable in outer suburbs, where urbanisation had reduced tree cover.

"The proportion of [Melbourne's] cover ... in outer suburbs is stark, indicating the majority of canopy cover is privately owned (in residential backyards)," the report said.

It warned green canopy cover was increasingly hard to provide in cities as backyards decreased in size and more people moved into urban areas.

The report added that public green spaces and recreation infrastructure was already overused and the high cost of land made it difficult to fund the delivery and maintenance of this type of service in these cities.



Economy to lose billions

From Page 1

found on the major roads into Melbourne and Sydney, with travel times and delays expected to soar.

By 2031 the most congested road in Melbourne would be the Hume Freeway between Donnybrook and the M80 Ring Road, with drivers facing a 39-minute delay on their daily morning run.

It would be little better on the afternoon return, with the delay forecast to be 31 minutes.

Other big delays could be expected between Gisborne South and the Tullamarine Freeway, from the air-

port into central Melbourne, and from Epping into the CBD via High Street.

The longest delay would be on the run from Geelong into the city on the Princes and West Gate freeways - at 69 minutes in the morning.

Over a full day, a person driving between Pakenham and the CBD would spend almost two hours extra in their vehicle because of congestion. The cost of all the congestion across Melbourne would rise from \$5.5 billion now to \$10.4 billion annually by 2031.

The cost facing public transport users in terms of crowding would

rise to \$352 million from \$75 million. The congestion costs take into account benefits expected to flow from \$200 billion in major construction work already under way or planned in major cities, putting pressure on state and federal governments to ramp up activity.

The Reserve Bank of Australia has urged all governments to lift their infrastructure spending, to help support the economy while also making cities more efficient for their residents.

Ms Madew said the Morrison government should re-examine 103 projects on the regulator's priority

Distracted motorists blamed for rise in

Timna Jacks
Transport reporter

Distracted motorists are driving up a spike in tram collisions, with cars crashing into trams three times a day on average and 20 people seriously injured last year.

Collins Street is a particular hot spot, with nearly 80 dangerous crashes there in 2018, followed by Flinders Street and Elizabeth Street, which each had 42 collisions.

Motorists failing to look out for trams while turning right, performing a U-turn or merging are largely to blame for crashes rising to 1100 in 2018, up from 970 the year before.

The Public Transport Minister, Yarra Trams and the Transport Department are calling on motorists and pedestrians to look out for trams, with half of the top 10 most dangerous sites in the CBD.

Public Transport Minister Melissa Horne warned of a significant rise in the number of motorists hitting trams, saying collisions were occurring on the city's most congested roads.

"If you're a motorist, be aware of the tram that's next to you. They can't swerve, they can't stop easily. Also, if you're a pedestrian, do things like take your earphones out; nothing is worth a collision with a

tram if you're checking a text message."

Outside the CBD, there were 52 crashes on St Kilda Road, 40 on Nicholson Street and 34 on Toorak Road and on Bridge Road.

Such incidents result in 10 of the city's 450 trams being out of service at any given time. Motorists were at fault in 97 per cent of the collisions recorded by the government.

Yarra Trams chief executive Nicolas Gindt said tram drivers were taught defensive driving techniques to avoid crashes but there were 100,000 extra cars being added to the roads each year, which was driving up the rate of incidents.

"The growth of the traffic is the main cause of the incidents," he said.

There were almost 40 serious passenger falls on trams last year, which means 40 people were admitted to hospital due to injuries caused by incidents or near misses.

The son of an elderly man who suffered serious injuries in a tram collision in 2017 has also joined the call for caution.

Michael Miller's father lost his balance and banged his head while travelling on a tram involved in a collision with a car.

The father, Jeff Miller, was in hospital for six weeks after dislocating his shoulder, fracturing two ver-

tebrae and breaking a collarbone.

"He has not been the same. A 79-year-old man who was extremely mobile prior to the accident [is now] learning how to walk again," Mr Miller said. "He is almost fully recovered but life is a new normal for my father. We would really like to see that everybody takes these messages extremely seriously."

The safety message comes as Yarra Trams staff are deciding on how and when to launch industrial action in coming weeks, after about 1500 tram drivers and customer service personnel voted to take action in pursuit of a 6 per cent annual wage rise.

Fra

Vince Rugari

Lance Franklin chance to play 300th game this coach John Long out of Friday Melbourne.

And Jarrad Moore race against time for a round at the SCG, with a long stacked against a veteran as he goes from a calf strain.

Franklin has been juring his hamstring thorn in June, stranded on 299. A 32-year-old has training but has to convince Long ready to play again.

The Swans play St Kilda in the Friday afternoon shapes as an id Franklin to note

Frank 'Bluey' Ada

Fare

Cities warned of water woes, soaring bills

Shane Wright
Senior economics correspondent

The supply of water to the nation's major cities faces repeating the mistakes that drove up power costs, Infrastructure Australia has warned, with fears of soaring bills and a lack of supply to the fastest-growing parts of Australia.

Releasing a report on the nation's infrastructure needs, the agency said it appeared the lessons of the Millennium Drought had been ignored or forgotten, just as much of the country faced growing risks from drought and wide-scale water shortages.

Despite the country having the highest per-capita surface water storage capacity in the world, Infrastructure Australia said poor pricing policies, a failure to plan for surging population growth, ageing pipes and climate change were all putting at risk the supply of water to urban areas.

Melbourne and Sydney have been forced to boost supplies from their desalination plants this year due to the drought across eastern Australia.

The Bureau of Meteorology this month revealed the dry hitting the Murray-Darling Basin is the worst since the 1900-02 drought.

Infrastructure Australia said the drought highlighted the failure of authorities across the country to learn from previous dry periods.

"Despite undergoing an extended period of drought at the beginning of the century, known as the Millennium Drought, Australia's urban water sector has largely failed to embed the lessons from this experience into planning and decision-making frameworks," the agency said.

"With large parts of the country drought-declared and the onset of another El Nino phase, this presents major issues for governments and utilities to manage over coming years."

Water consumption per person dropped 16 per cent in the immediate wake of the Millennium Drought, but improvements in

water efficiency "tapered off" as public interest and awareness waned.

There are also large differences in water usage and prices between cities. Sydney households use almost 50 per cent more water than those in Melbourne, while the cost of filling a swimming pool in Brisbane is 70 per cent more than in Perth.

The agency said the shift to desalination plants in recent years had been expensive and difficult to justify when there were other, cheaper ways to manage supplies.

These included much greater use of water recycling and preventive maintenance, which was needed given many of the nation's



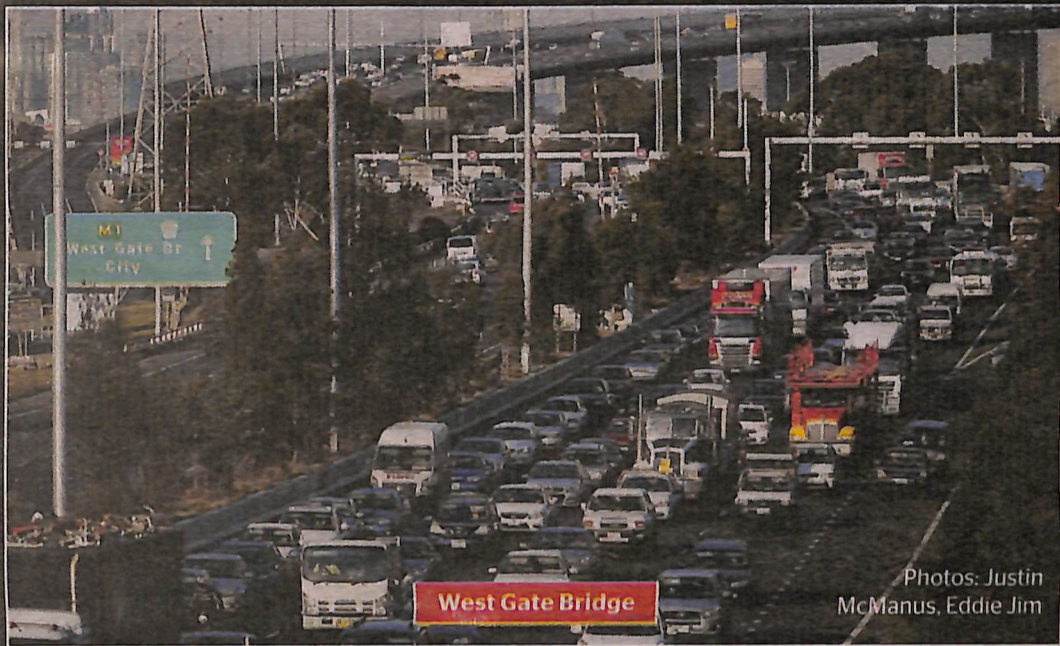
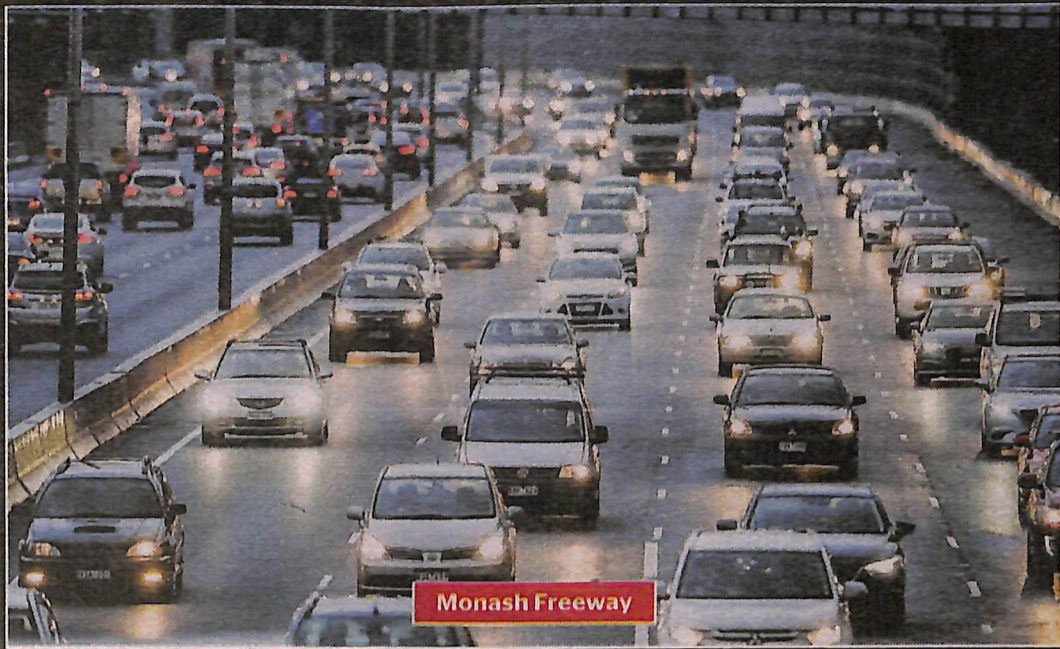
Upgrading water systems could lift prices 50 per cent.

water pipes had been installed between 1900 and 1975.

Upgrading water systems was likely to be expensive and could lift prices 50 per cent within a decade - the same sort of cost increases inflicted on households due to changes in the electricity sector.

"The combined impacts of climate change, population growth, rising community expectations and ageing networks mean that costs of providing services are likely to put upward pressure on household budgets over coming years," the agency said.

It also noted that risks to water were not confined to the nation's major cities. It found rural communities with moderate or small populations would also run into financial troubles.



Photos: Justin McManus, Eddie Jim

as streets near gridlock

'This infrastructure boom we are in is the new normal.'

Romilly Madew, Infrastructure Australia chief

list, describing them as "ready to go". "The infrastructure priority list is a pipeline," she said.

"Funding could be used to drive what the RBA governor has been saying as part of an investment in infrastructure stimulus."

Outside of better private and pub-

lic transport, Infrastructure Australia said there were a range of challenges facing much of the nation.

Technological change, such as self-drive semi-trailers, would help Australia deal with some of the problems, but they in turn were creating new ones.

The advent of online shopping meant there would be an increase in the number of small trucks delivering goods in residential streets that were not built to take such vehicles.

Many state governments used demountable classrooms to deal with surging student populations, but these were not adequate to meet

expected demand, nor conducive to good learning.

"Without changes to the way demand is evaluated and new capacity provided, schools in fast-growing cities will be unable to meet growing demand, risking reduced quality of education outcomes," Infrastructure Australia said.

Policy failures in energy, particularly electricity and gas, had pushed up living costs for many households, with a risk of this being repeated in the supply of water.

It noted Australia was unlikely to reach its Paris greenhouse gas reduction goals.

tram collisions

Proposed actions include a 48-hour strike, a refusal to check myki passes or wear uniforms.

Mr Gindt said this was a disappointing outcome and the company had applied for a conciliation process to be mediated by the Fair Work Commission to avert strike action. "I believe that industrial action is not necessary," he said.

Yarra Trams is offering a 3 per cent pay rise.

Rail staff, in their dispute with Metro Trains, called off plans to not check mykis or wear uniforms yesterday or next Monday, with the Rail, Tram and Bus Union citing "constructive conversations" it had

with Metro over the weekend.

The two parties in the rail dispute are expected to return this week for escalated negotiations, but union members are still planning to walk off the job for four hours on August 27 if an agreement is not reached.

Ms Horne said she had spoken to Metro and the union, but would not confirm if the government had weighed in on the weekend to help achieve the breakthrough.

"Today has been a really good outcome for passengers. I've talked to both parties and encouraged them to sit down and negotiate and that's what we're seeing has occurred," she said.

TRAM V CAR COLLISION HOT SPOTS IN 2018



SOURCE: YARRA TRAMS BA NATAGE A005