



# Car-lovers drive pollution surge

## New city tunnel to spark environmental backlash

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STATE POLITICS

VICTORIAN motorists have contributed to a massive surge in greenhouse gas emissions, with State Government figures showing transport pollution has soared by more than 25% in the past two decades.

Victoria's overall carbon emissions have leapt by 12.6% since 1990 — but transport pollution has increased at more than double that rate, by 26.5%.

The revelation is set to galvanise those opposed to plans in Sir Rod Eddington's Melbourne transport review, due on Wednesday, which will include a massive \$10 billion tunnel under the city's inner suburbs, as well as more roads and extensions to the rail network.

The tunnel, linking the Eastern Freeway to CityLink and beyond to the western suburbs, is meant to ease the bottleneck where the freeway connects with main city roads and provide an alternative east-west traffic option to take pressure off the struggling West Gate Bridge.

While proponents say the tunnel will ease mounting congestion as the city's population soars towards 4 million, critics argue that such massive funding would be better invested in improving public transport infrastructure to limit the state's contribution to global warming.

Opposition climate change spokesman David Davis — who will attend Premier John Brumby's environment summit

in Melbourne on Friday — said any attempt by the Government to reduce the state's carbon footprint must include a strategy to cut transport pollution.

"What is absolutely clear is transport is a real challenge for this Government and they appear to have dropped the ball on greenhouse emissions and transport," Mr Davis said.

"An early start for them would be to improve public transport (but) . . . new proposals need to be assessed against the challenge of transport emissions."

Nationally, transport is the third largest emitter of greenhouse gases behind power generation and agriculture, but State Infrastructure Department figures obtained by *The Sunday Age* show that in Victoria it is the second largest polluter, with every Victorian contributing four tonnes of carbon emissions a year from transport use.

Road transport, which includes all passenger vehicles and truck freight, is the largest component, contributing 14.8% of the state's total emissions.

Despite these figures, the transport sector will not be a key topic of discussion at this week's climate change summit.

The summit, to include more than 100 delegates from government, environment, business and social welfare groups, will discuss how to frame new laws to reduce carbon emissions and how to prepare businesses, families and the regions to meet the challenge of cutting emissions.

Environment and Climate

Change Minister Gavin Jennings said it was important Victoria led the debate on climate change because the state faced big challenges in reducing emissions.

"Victoria, because of our geography, because of our coal structure, we start from behind," he said. "We need to put Victoria at the front of the change."

Wayne Kayler-Thomson, chief executive of the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said Melbourne needed the new tunnel. "We need to be bold — imagine what Melbourne's traffic would be like now with no CityLink," he said. Mr Kayler-Thomson also called for a big investment in public transport, citing the NSW Government's plans for a \$12.5 billion underground metro train system for Sydney.

Sir Rod is expected to recommend plans for a new underground rail network linking inner Melbourne suburbs.

But the centrepiece of Sir Rod's blueprint will be the inner-city tunnel, which critics warn will face more opposition than the dredging of Port Phillip Bay. Greens MP Greg Barber predicted Labor would "lose votes everywhere" if it built the new road tunnel. He said the project would "soak up billions of dollars that could be used more efficiently moving people around by fast public transport".

"The problem with the public transport that they will recommend is . . . we may end up with a road tunnel and rail tunnel serving the same destinations."