



Meet John Grant, proponent of Melbourne's "forgotten transport mode" — that is, walking.

# Shanks's pony misses out in tussle for funding

By **CLAY LUCAS**  
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AS A mode of transport walking helps tackle obesity, has no greenhouse emissions, and — perhaps most importantly for governments in tough financial times — footpaths are cheap.

And yet paradoxically it is "the forgotten transport mode", one of the nation's top transport experts says, precisely because it is so cheap.

"Politicians in Victoria want big projects to cut a ribbon on," says Dr John Grant, an "active transport" consultant who has helped more than 30 councils around Australia devise strategies to get more people walking and cycling.

Within weeks, the State Government will release a transport strategy that will pledge billions in infrastructure spending.

Premier John Brumby has sniffed the political wind, and knows he must quell growing community anger over Victoria's overcrowded, under-resourced public transport system.

But Dr Grant, who helped shape one of this Government's most contentious planning policies — *Melbourne 2030* — predicts walking and cycling won't get their share of money.

"They are simply too cheap to give the appearance of a "big" investment, he says. "Walking and cycling make up 20% of all

## MAKING "ACTIVE TRANSPORT" HAPPEN

- **MAKE** the two kilometre **ZONE** around every station, tram and bus stop easier to access as a pedestrian or cyclist.
- **FORCE** every member of John Brumby's cabinet to give up their car for a week, to see how the young, old, poor and disabled cope.
- **REMOVE** any subsidy that encourages car use (cars as part of a salary package, novated leases) from all State Government funded organisations and departments.
- **PROPERLY FUND** city-wide car pooling.
- **FIX** all badly maintained footpaths, pram ramps, crossings, lights and street furniture throughout Victoria.
- **REQUIRE** — and fund — travel plans for every school and university campus in Victoria so that students know the easiest ways to catch public transport, at the best price at the most convenient times.
- **INNOVATE** — One idea is to allow students who walk or ride to school to go home five minutes before the bell. Those being collected by car leave at the normal time.

journeys in Melbourne," Dr Grant says, "but they attract less than 1% of funding."

Dr Grant put together the consultation program for *Melbourne 2030*, a strategy that in 2002 laid out how Melbourne would become more dense, and more public transport-friendly, over the next three decades. The policy has made little difference

to either; Melbourne's outer suburbs are sprawling just as quickly as in 2002.

As for public transport, the tram, train and bus plans that came out of the strategy — which predicted today's severe overcrowding if nothing was done — were shelved.

The Government ignored pleading from the *Melbourne*

2030 consultation group to do more for public transport and liveability, says Dr Grant.

"We had 1500 people on the consultation process for *Melbourne 2030*, and less than 10 people said they wanted to see bigger roads and the freeway network finished," he said. "The rest wanted better public transport, and to be able to walk

and cycle safely to more places." Out of *Melbourne 2030* came \$15 million for local walking projects, says Dr Grant.

"And since then, widening the M1 (the West Gate and Monash freeways, which came out of later transport plans) cost \$1.4 billion. Or EastLink, that cost \$100 million per kilometre, or \$3.8 billion."



John Grant chose the area around West Footscray train station as an example of how infrastructure across Melbourne has been neglected.

**MAIN PICTURE:** "The ramp to West Footscray station is steep. There is also no signage to tell travellers who might be new to rail travel where the ramps go. There is heavy traffic below the ramp."

**ABOVE:** "Filthy, paper-strewn environment just outside the station, with bikes locked to a cyclone wire fence because there is nowhere else to lock them. The station sign has been vandalised. The footpath is in poor condition and covered in gravel."

**BELOW:** "No pram ramp at one end, discouraging people with small children from taking the train. The median is small and offers zero protection from cars for users. And it is full of weeds."

PICTURES: PAT SCALA



Dr Grant, who left the Government in 2004, believes its coming plan will be dressed up as supporting public transport, and walking and cycling.

And if finances allow, it could be crammed with expensive road projects, he says. "The Frankston Bypass, widening freeways, expensive tunnels everywhere. It adds up to

billions and billions of dollars."

To spur the economy, he says, the state must instead pour money into local projects.

"Footpath repairs, new pram ramps, road crossings, signage, lighting, street furniture, improved access to schools, train stations, tram and bus stops, better walking and cycling to shopping centres."