

Briefing for Mike Kelly on Transition Town Triangle Plus Community Bus Initiative

The reality of Peak Oil and a low emissions future will change the way we live and develop as a society. It is becoming apparent that although we live in a global economy, many of our challenges are best tackled at a community level. This is particularly true of regional areas.

The Transition Town movement has recognised that in the areas of food, energy and transport, many of our needs can be met by local solutions. A community bus, run by volunteer labour and bio diesel presents one such solution to the need for affordable transport that exists in all regional areas and particularly ours.

The proposal for a bus presents an opportunity for true community based action with benefits for a large number of interests ranging from the corporate sector to local business and residents.

The current global financial collapse has highlighted the deficiencies of transnational corporations and it is becoming clear that cottage industries can cater for some local needs more effectively. Bio diesel production fits this model perfectly. Most communities produce waste oil from local cafes, clubs and pubs. For many businesses, disposing of the oil is a major environmental problem. This waste oil can easily and cheaply be converted into a fuel that will run most diesel engines with minor modifications to the fuel system. The diesel production units are relatively inexpensive, use low technology, can be operated with minimum training and basic OH&S standards. The by-products of the refining process are mostly non toxic and reusable and the emissions less toxic than from diesel produced from fossil fuels. The potential for small scale regional employment from bio diesel production should also not be ignored.

While bio diesel can be used for a variety of purposes, The Triangle area has a desperate need for an affordable bus service that can provide a link to the service centres. This will become even more important if the proposed residential development in Bermagui goes ahead.

The bus would also have a valuable role in transporting local sporting teams and other groups that regularly travel large distances. It would be a part of the sustainable tourism industry that will develop along this part of the coast as Mathew Nott's vision for this area comes to fruition.

Obviously, the main difficulty of this initiative is securing the bus. Corporate Australia as well as local business and councils can help overcome this by providing various forms of sponsorship, and derive enormous benefit as a result.

The Rudd Government's relationship with Toyota could be helpful when presenting the case for Toyota to provide a small bus for this project. It would be invaluable as a rolling test bed for new diesel transport technology and properly promoted would be a boon for tourism as well as Toyota's image as a responsible corporate citizen in regional Australia.

Alternatively local bus companies could potentially play a role as could local councils. Their facilities and expertise could be incorporated into the initiative. We have had a positive response to this proposal from councillors from both Bega and Eurobodalla Shire Councils.

The community bus initiative would play a role in the culture change that will be the first imperative of the transition to a low emissions future. There is a real fear in many people that the Carbon Emissions Reduction Scheme will destroy their standard of living. Our proposal will demonstrate that there are viable solutions to many of the perceived problems of our near future and that everyone can play a part in those solutions.