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MEDIA RELEASE

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Government must deliver improved access to public transport

Inadequate access to reliable public transport for regional and rural Victorians means they have no option but pay the soaring costs for fuel says David Koch, Member for Western Victoria.

David Koch told Parliament this week that there is no doubt rising fuel prices are hitting Victorians hard and with predictions that average petrol prices could reach \$2.00 a litre in regional Victoria before Christmas, the ramifications for regional and rural Victorians will be unprecedented.

“The soaring price of fuel is causing widespread hardship and people are looking for ways to reduce reliance on fuel. They have long called for access to affordable and reliable public transport.

“A lot of people do not have any access to any public transport services and where they do exist they are often infrequent and timed to suit the travel needs of passengers from urban centres.

“With massive fuel cost increases, access to public transport in regional centres is more important than ever for linking people to jobs, shopping and other activities at a frequency and time that meets community needs.

“Those in smaller isolated communities need a minimum daily link to regional centres and more services on main public transport routes so they can reduce their reliance on private transport”.

Lack of public transport is consistently rated by rural and regional communities as one of the most significant barriers to accessing services, employment and social networks.

“Victorians, who live in rural and larger centres without access to public transport, feel they are treated as second-class citizens when it comes to provision of even basic services and as a consequence they have no option but to pay for the high cost of fuel.

“This reinforces the need for the State Government to urgently address access to improved public transport, especially for those who have never had anything more than limited services.

“In response, the Minister for Industry and Trade Theo Theophanous, flippantly and unapologetically rejected that the Brumby Government is failing regional and rural Victorians by not providing adequate access to timely and reliable public transport services to regional and rural Victorians.

“His behaviour again shows the Government’s arrogance that does nothing but reinforce the widely held view it is a city-centric Government that sees non-metropolitan Victorians as second-class citizens.

“Instead of ignoring the issue or trying bandaid fixes, the Brumby Government needs to build an accessible, efficient and modern public transport system that meets community needs.

“Minister Kosky must urgently find solutions for non-metropolitan communities who are experiencing transport disadvantage and social isolation so they can reduce their reliance on petrol and have access to better public transport”, David Koch said.

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