

Media Release

Sydney Business Chamber



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Coming soon....M4 'car park day!' Only one week to go!

The Sydney Business Chamber said with just one week to go until the M4 toll is removed, the RTA has failed to inform the community about the impacts of the toll removal on increased travel times and congestion.

The RTA was advised by the NSW Auditor-General to '*communicate to motorists the likely effect of toll removal on congestion and travel time by the end of 2009*',¹ and yet have done little to inform motorists about the impact removing the M4 toll will have on peak hour travel.

The Auditor-General further recommended the RTA '*determine the effect of the toll removal on motorists travelling between the city and Parramatta during peak periods, and advise motorists before handback*.'²

The RTA has failed to meet its commitment to the Auditor-General to begin a public information campaign by mid-January³ with the RTA website only being updated on 27 January 2010 and advertisements appearing in print last week.

"Monday 15 February will mark the beginning of gridlock for the M4 motorway if the NSW Government insists on following through with its promise to scrap the M4 toll," said Patricia Forsythe, Executive Director of the Sydney Business Chamber.

"The NSW Auditor-General has clearly stated that an additional 2,000 vehicles per hour will use the motorway by 2011 turning the M4, which is already near capacity, into a virtual car park – 500 of those additional vehicles will be the direct result of scrapping the toll.

"The RTA has dropped the ball on informing the community of the impact scrapping the M4 toll will have on traffic. All the RTA has managed is to advise motorist of the changes to the toll plaza and not the long term impact removing the toll will have on travel times.

"Scrapping the \$2.75 toll will be an artificial saving for motorists taking into account the additional costs of a 27% increase in the morning peak hour travel times as well as more wear and tear on vehicles.

"The NSW Government has embraced policies that have encouraged Sydneysiders to use their cars when the community has become increasingly vocal in its support of public transport investment.

¹ NSW Auditor General, *Handback of the M4 Tollway Report*, p4.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid, p.6.

“The M4/M5 cashback scheme and the decision to scrap the M4 toll are examples of government policy that are effectively encouraging road congestion.

“Retaining the M4 toll is a perfect opportunity for a cash-strapped NSW Government to invest additional funds directly into transport infrastructure. A recent poll by Sydney Business Chamber shows 70% of respondents would support retaining the toll if the Government were to invest the toll revenue directly into public transport and roads.

Mrs Forsythe said that the residents and businesses of Sydney’s West would be the main beneficiaries of applying the retained M4 toll for infrastructure investment with strong support in the poll for projects such as the M4 East Extension, North West Rail Link and Western Metro– all projects that would benefit Sydney’s West.

“If the NSW Government is serious about tackling transport congestion then they need to make the tough decision to retain the M4 toll – both as a way to regulate peak hour traffic and to provide additional transport infrastructure.”

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