# **Broken record**

## Blah

Blah blah blah blah blah.

Its new year. And you know what the beagle has for you.[[1]](#endnote-1)

Like a broken record.

Or a slo-mo crash from which you can’t avert your eyes.

Official statistics. Released pre-Xmas.[[2]](#endnote-2)

Unremarkably unremarked by the thoroughly unremarkable.

You think the traffic is bad? Appalling driver behaviour e.g phone distraction irrelevant.[[3]](#endnote-3)

Cheer lobby groups bleating about ‘returning’ revenue from roads?[[4]](#endnote-4)

Heed politicians braying – this time, a first – they will bust congestion by yet another motorway?[[5]](#endnote-5)

Why not channel another Morrison - Big Jim.

Big Jim?:

*‘But anyway, I don't believe in it  
I think it's a bunch of bullshit, myself  
But I tell you this, man, I tell you this  
I don't know what's going to happen, man, but I wanna have  
My kicks before the whole shithouse goes up in flames  
Alright!’[[6]](#endnote-6)*

Channel? How about:

fix my road before the whole transport policy shithouse goes up in flames!

## Broken record

2016-17 public sector road fiscal deficit – road spending exceeded revenues: $12.3bn.[[7]](#endnote-7)

Breaking the 2015-16 record: $9.0bn.

Five-year total: $40.3bn. Debt and deficit something or other babbling?[[8]](#endnote-8)

Cause: road spending increases. Real spending up 13.4% in 2016-17. Compared with real revenue 1.8%, population 1.6%. Road use up 1.5%.

A longer period – five years? Real spending up 25%, real revenue 6%, population 8%, road use 10%.

An even longer period, say since the turn of the millennium? Real spending 65%, real revenue 8%, population 27%, road use 33%.

At its most charitable: (after inflation) road spending this century increased at more than twice the rate of road use. Accelerating in recent years.

Population growth is not the cause. Even in capital cities. Nor is more road use.

And a little bit for the aficionados: (after inflation) Commonwealth road spending more than trebled since the 2000-01. Yet local government spending increased by less than a tenth this rate: 19%.

Wonder no more about local road potholes. Or why the rail industry finds it difficult to compete against enormous anti-competitive subsidies to highways.

All this before initiatives to ease the financial burden on ‘long suffering’ motorists – such as registration and toll rebates in NSW. Or the NSW Opposition’s ‘cashback’.[[9]](#endnote-9)

Almost forgot! Silly me. Cost recovery 2016-17: 59%. Another record (low). Somewhat below the 250%+ that would be optimal to deal with congestion, pollution etc.[[10]](#endnote-10)

Now some salutations and congratulations to supplement the new year’s honours list.

## Three hellos and thank you

1. To the ‘analysts’ and commentators who have remained in denial of the above for years.[[11]](#endnote-11)
2. To the Transport Ministerial Council. Topics too unimportant for their agenda.[[12]](#endnote-12)
3. To the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure etc and its research branch. Not even their (un)usual (brazen) ‘fudges’ can hide this.[[13]](#endnote-13)

Australian roads policy continues to do Charles Ponzi proud.

## Don’t expect

To see this elsewhere. Tables available at thejadebeagle.com. Check them or do your own.

Some charts follow.

Just one more point. Per capita road spending increased by more than 30% since 2000-01.

Ponder that value for money as you sit in your alleged migrant-caused traffic jams.

Now those so inclined can go back to groupthink whinging about population and overlook this trivia.

Happy new year to those who don’t.

J Austen

3 January 2019

1. Last year it was: <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/a-tiresome-chore.html>. Previously: <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/zombie-road-apocalypse.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. <https://bitre.gov.au/publications/2018/yearbook_2018.aspx> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/untitled1.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/if-only-governments-spent-what-they-collected-from-roads.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. E.g. <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/new-portfolio-seeks-to-ease-city-crowding-with-infrastructure-investment-and-decentralisation-20180827-p5003p.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. <https://genius.com/The-doors-american-night-lyrics> [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. If road related revenues are properly defined rather than as presented by BITRE – see note i (above) [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Debt and deficit disaster: <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/budget-now-a-debt-and-deficit-disaster-pm>. Why not a temporary road levy to fix it Mr Abbott? [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/toll-relief-%E2%80%93-faqs>. NSW Opposition: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/dec/17/enough-madness-can-playing-it-safe-win-michael-daley-the-nsw-election> [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Optimal revenues: <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/roads-1-tar-baby.html> which refers to <https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/bitstream/2123/19237/1/ITLS-WP-11-17.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/grasshopper.html>

    [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/austral-obscura-1.html>

    <https://www.thejadebeagle.com/austral-obscura-2.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Starting with revenues and expenditures in ‘real prices’ and continuing practices outlined in notes i, iv and x (above). Speaking of which, the calculations in this article for years prior to 2016-17 used the construction price index for both revenues and spending. Perhaps they should have used the CPI for spending. Better would have been properly presented historical financial statistics in the Infrastructure Yearbook. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)