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Support for private sector role in public transport varies across states

Victorians are more averse to private sector involvement in public transport than their fellow Australians, the latest quarterly national transport survey from the University of Sydney shows highlighting a possible factor in the state's recent election results.

The Institute of Transport and Logistics Studies-Interfleet Transport Opinion Survey (TOPS) shows Victoria is the only Australian state where those wanting less private sector involvement in public transport outnumber those who want more.

Institute Director Professor David Hensher says "only 35 per cent of Victorians favour the private sector playing a greater role in the provision of public transport while 42 per cent prefer a reduced role for the private sector.

"Other states view the private sector more favourably, perhaps suggesting they see private involvement as a path to improved public transport," he says. "Around half of Western Australians and Queenslanders support a greater role from private interests.

"Australians think improving public transport is the nation's biggest transport issue, but this sentiment is even more marked in Victoria than other states.

"Victoria's public transport has experienced more privatisation than any other state, with tram and metropolitan rail services franchised to private providers in the last decade aiming to improve efficiency. But many users believe services have deteriorated in private operators' hands with unreliability and overcrowding, possibly due to under-investment.

"It's possible the decline in service levels and increased inefficiencies influenced voting sentiments in Victoria, particularly those in Melbourne's outer suburbs."

TOPS, the first survey to measure transport opinions on a regular basis, is a reliable indicator of Australians' ongoing confidence about transport in their local area and transport in Australia.

The December 2010 quarterly report is at: <http://sydney.edu.au/business/itls/tops>

The Institute of Transport and Logistics Studies in the Faculty of Economics and Business provides education and conducts research in transport, logistics and supply chain management. Interfleet Technology is one of the world's leading rail consultancy groups providing strategic, operational, management and technical services to the international rail industry.

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