

## Who Needs a Car Anyway?

Last year I sold my car and bought a car for my then 17 year old son. I thought I was pretty smart at the time because the car I acquired was a 2 seat, 4 cylinder, convertible sports car.

I bought this car because I knew he could have a heap of fun in it without having to drive that fast and that he could never have a backseat full of drunken hoons.

Late in February, he successfully negotiated his license test and I handed the car over; rendering myself 'carless'.

I thought to myself at the time, "I will get another car soon!" Not being in a hurry because I had a lot of travel looming, I set about walking to my office in the mornings and taking the odd train, tram or cab when required.

Last night whilst walking home, I was having a conversation with a good friend and we began to analyse the cost benefits of not having a car. It lead me to an interesting conclusion.

Right now, my transport costs amount to the following:

Tram or Train ticket up to 4 times a week \$25:00

Up to Four Cab Rides per week \$70:00

If I bought a new car worth say \$25,000, that depreciated at 20%, my weekly costs would be:

Car Depreciation \$100:00

Registration \$ 12:00

Insurance \$ 20:00

Petrol, Parking and tolls \$ 70:00

Maintenance – Services, tyres etc \$ 25:00

Lost Savings Interest on my \$25,000 \$ 30:00

The total cost of owning a car for me would be about \$257:00 per week, as opposed to about \$95:00 per week without a car. That's nearly \$8000 per annum.

This set me to thinking. What would happen to the average family budget if there was no second car?

Do we really need that second car, or is it just a convenience that we have become dependant upon?

Not having a car has changed a number of things for me. For example, I have to manage my time better. I now make sure I stop at the market or the local green grocer on the way home from work. And yes, I carry my goods whilst I walk.

Further, I am now walking an additional 30 to 50 kilometres that I previously used to drive. If I need to race down to the super market, I have to walk.

Previously I would have driven the 1.3km.

Further, I look back at my car usage and realise something else. A lot of my driving, particularly on the weekends, was more a matter of running away from a period of boredom than it was about doing something useful.

This then brings me back to the whole issue of public transport, carbon emissions and exercise. If we get out of the car and start using a combination

of walking and riding on public transport, we are doing a number of positive things. First, more commuters means more attention on improving the public transport systems.

Second, by not driving we are creating less carbon emissions. And third, by walking more we are getting valuable exercise and actually forcing ourselves to relax a little.

This then leads me to see that owning a car is not that important. It is something that we have grown to believe that we need and simply create a burden for ourselves without actually analyzing the decision.

When you go to a city like New York, it is very common for people to not own cars. They use public transport, taxis and they walk.

I get the feeling that a lot of things could be improved if we challenge some of our automatic beliefs about things. I have no doubt that even though we do not want to admit it, we are constantly being seduced by advertisers.

So, I may well buy another car, but not without thinking long and hard about how much I might need it. Meanwhile, I am enjoying the walks.