

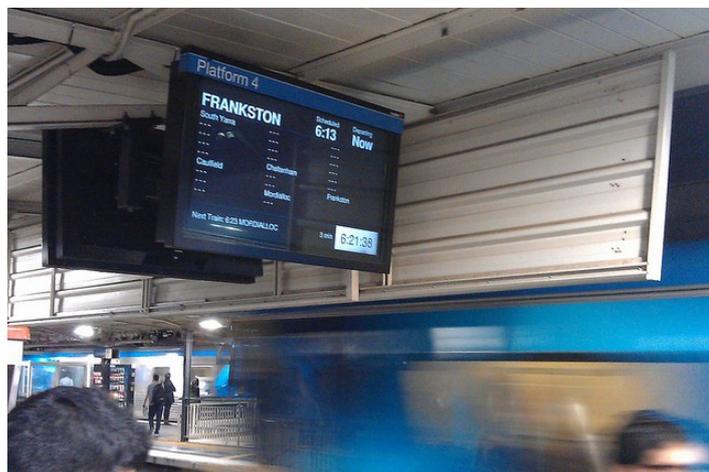
Metro's stop skip shenanigans

A loophole in Metro's contract allows the operator to avoid fines by skipping stations with barely any warning, with passengers the losers. This perverse behaviour occurs only because we have a privatised system lacking proper oversight by PTV.

In April, passengers were introduced to a new way of running Melbourne trains. Upon arriving at a station, passengers would be told the train will skip its remaining stops and run express to its destination. Passengers needing intermediate stations would be left at the platform to wait for the next service. Those at the skipped stations found their train effectively cancelled.

As the *Herald Sun* reported on 19 April (after being tipped off by the PTUA), Metro admitted to introducing the practice after failing to meet punctuality targets in February and March. A driver on a late train would be instructed by controllers to offload passengers and run express to the final destination. Metro claims this practice is aimed at the greater good, but of course there is a commercial benefit: Metro is fined when trains run late, and receives bonuses when they run on time.

Subsequently, Metro has taken the practice to ludicrous extremes: even before they depart, trains are being altered to stop at only a handful of stations en route (see photo). In many cases, including that shown, Metro could have avoided knock-on delays without inconvenience to passengers, simply by recalling trains that were on their way to stabling. But that would not avoid the hit to its punctuality statistics.



Under its contract with the government, Metro can temporarily alter its timetable (such as to convert stopping services to express) whenever it judges this is necessary due to an 'incident' or 'external disruption': in practice, anything which can cause a train to be late. And while a service is treated as a part-cancellation if it bypasses the City Loop or the Altona Loop, it does *not* count if it merely fails to stop at stations other than these; and if the train then arrives at its destination on time or early, it will tick all the boxes for good performance.

This is a textbook example of a private operator 'gaming' the rules of a privatised system, in order to legally profit at public expense. The public interest in this case is represented by Public Transport Victoria, to which Metro is supposed to be answerable but which is proving to be a deep disappointment. As Metro's operation comes more and more to resemble the famous *Yes Minister* hospital with no patients (yet undeniably clean and efficient), PTV must prove its worth, or be exposed as another sham initiative of the political spin machine.

PTV a rebranding exercise? ⇒ Page 4

Clifton Hill not so Metro ⇒ Page 6

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Keeping in touch:

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Ross House
247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne
Telephone (03) 9650 7898
Email: office@ptua.org.au

Membership Enquiries

Call or email the office (see above).

Commuter Club

PTUA members can obtain cheap yearly Myki Passes. See www.ptua.org.au/members/offers.

Internet

Our website is at www.ptua.org.au. The PTUA runs email lists for member discussions, and to stay up to date with PTUA events. Members can also view archived newsletters online. See: www.ptua.org.au/members/resources.

Committee

Daniel Bowen—President
Tony Morton—Secretary
Malcolm Simister—Treasurer
Matthew Ferrantino
Michael Galea
Tim Hoffmann
Ian Hundley
Terry Konstandelis
Tim Long
Tim Petersen
Charles Pick
David Robertson

Branch convenors

Paul Westcott—Geelong
Jeremy Lunn—Eastern Suburbs

Contact

All committee members can be emailed using the format `firstname.lastname@ptua.org.au`.

Member Meetings

Melbourne

Thursday 23 August
Ground Floor, Ross House
247 Flinders Lane, City
More details: see opposite

Eastern Suburbs

Third Tuesday of every month, 7pm
'The Barn' (behind Box Hill Baptist Church)
3 Ellingworth Parade (off Station St)
Box Hill

Geelong

First Saturday of every month (except Jan), 10:30am
Multimedia Room
Courthouse Youth Arts Centre
Corner Gheringhap and Little Malop Streets, Geelong

PTUA Activities in Autumn 2012

Station User Panel wound up: Useability principles published

The Station User Panel was wound up in March after agreeing the Railway Station Useability Principles and advising about community engagement for future railway station developments.

The Principles are now published and available online at <http://www.transport.vic.gov.au/projects/transport-strategies-and-plans/planning/station-user-panel>.

The Principles are intended to inform the planning, design and operation of railway stations and are directed at the project teams involved. They are not available to the public in hard copy.

The Panel was advised that the Principles were recommended to PTV in the handover from DoT, but it is not known whether they have been adopted.

PTUA meets Auditor-General on traffic congestion

The Victorian Auditor-General's Office is commencing an inquiry into traffic

congestion in Victoria. This follows on from last year's audit of the management of major road projects, which found that agencies risked overstating their benefits, and did not adequately test their costing assumptions.

The PTUA prepared a briefing paper, and met with VAGO staff in early June. Our key message is that of transport planner J.M. Thomson in his classic 1977 book *Great Cities and Their Traffic*. Congestion is a mere byproduct of latent demand for private car travel that is virtually limitless, and can therefore respond to increased road supply indefinitely. The level of congestion will accordingly depend not on the supply of road space, but rather on the quality of the alternatives, and how well they compete with car travel.



Farewell to Kerryn Wilmot

Long-time PTUA campaigner Kerryn Wilmot has recently relocated to Sydney, and as a result has resigned as the PTUA's Treasurer.

Kerryn served as Treasurer of the PTUA for the last six years after joining the committee in 2005, and has been instrumental in many of the activities of the organisation.

Apart from coordinating our office volunteers, Kerryn has managed the Commuter Club programme—which has been very successful at attracting new members—and our presence at the Sustainable Living Festival.

Kerryn's contribution will be greatly missed, and we wish her well.

Our thanks go to PTUA committee member Malcolm Simister who has stepped in as Treasurer for the time being. However, now would be a great time for any members who are willing and able, to get more involved in the organisation. If you can help, please contact the office:

office@ptua.org.au

City of Yarra gets behind Doncaster rail, no East West road

Yarra City Council has embarked on a \$100,000 campaign to support rail to Doncaster and oppose the Baillieu Government's (and now Tony Abbott's) east-west motorway.

Council has formally declared its support for Doncaster 'Option 1' via the Eastern Freeway median. This route has long had community support, and is

likely to be the cheapest and most effective option (see our April issue).

The council is to be congratulated for embracing the campaign plan after strong action from the local community. The PTUA has long understood that council support can be decisive in political decisions on transport projects, and has campaigned for such council-

based initiatives since the early 2000s.

PTUA members Tony Morton and John McPherson are participating in the steering committee for the campaign. Watch *PTUA News* for regular updates.

<http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/Parking-roads-and-transport/Sustainable-transport/trains-not-tollroads>

5000 residents sign up for Mernda rail

After months of dedicated work by volunteers, local businesses and residents, the South Morang and Mernda Rail Alliance (SMMRA) has raised 5185 signatures supporting a rail extension from South Morang to Mernda.

This mirrors an earlier successful cam-

aign effort in 2006, when the Alliance raised 3600 signatures supporting the original extension to South Morang.

Labor MP for Yan Yean Danielle Green submitted the petition to Parliament on 21 June.

The Alliance hopes this petition will provide the ammunition for the ALP

to enact a policy to extend the railway to Mernda immediately, should they be elected in 2014. It is also hoped the Baillieu Government pays heed to the massive support and throws its own weight behind the extension, which would follow the still-extant Whittlesea rail reserve.

Myki progress, pain

The Myki rollout rolls on. By mid-June all Metcard machines at suburban stations had been switched off, leaving only a handful in the CBD. From July, 'value Metcards' (all those other than 2-hour, Daily and Seniors Daily fares) are no longer available, pushing more onto Myki.

We expect the Transport Ticketing Authority will soon announce that Metcards are no longer available for sale on trams, buses, or station booking offices.

It is now possible to buy a Myki card at any railway station. However, concession Mykis are only available at staffed stations or at retail outlets. Myki cards will also eventually be sold on buses, but it is unclear if this includes concession cards, or top-up of existing cards.

With no single-use tickets now available at unstaffed railway stations, problems are emerging for occasional users, including tourists. It's not just an issue with having to buy a \$6 Myki card: there is almost no information available on the system about how much money to load onto a card to make a trip.

The removal of ticket machines from trams will cause further issues, with no top-up or ticket purchase option provided on board. Trams already have the worst rates of fare evasion, and this is set to get considerably worse, as passengers with every intention of paying will find they have no option to do so.

The government must reconsider its position on short term tickets. No other major city in the world has a 'card only' system, with good reason. To attract new patrons, every possible barrier must be lowered—yet Myki as it stands will present a considerable barrier to new users.

Members' meeting with Felipe Carvajal

The next members' meeting is on Thursday 23 August at Ross House where our guest speaker will be Felipe Carvajal, former Transport Planner at the National Planning Department of Columbia.

Felipe is currently a Transport Planner

with Darebin City Council. In his former role at the National Planning Department, he played a key part in one of the top agencies reporting directly to the Colombian President.

When you think of Colombia, excellence in public transport may not be the first thing that springs to mind. But, perhaps surprisingly, Bogota operates one of the world's most innovative and effective bus networks.

Felipe was intimately involved in establishing Bogota's bus system and other Colombian public transport initiatives. His presentation will concern the reform of public transport operation in Colombia in the last 15 years and its regional and international impact.

From a federal governance point of view, he will discuss how a successful urban transport experiment in Bogota—TransMilenio—created the conditions to change not only Bogota's mobility but also the Colombian government's innovative approach to mass transit operation and investments. Felipe will also discuss the relevance for Melbourne of a bold experiment half a world away.

Driven around the bend: study highlights indirect bus routes

Melbourne's buses are under-performing compared to bus services in other cities, and bus routes need significant reform as part of efforts to boost their performance, according to a PTUA study released in June.

The study examined the directness of routes in Melbourne, Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo by comparing actual route distance to the shortest road distance between the start and end of the route.

On average, bus routes in Melbourne were 70% longer than the shortest route possible. Routes in Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong were 80%, 110% and 60% longer respectively. This compares with a recommended maximum diversion of 20–30% in best practice guidelines.

These meandering routes mean that bus journeys take longer than necessary, and fewer services can be provided per hour with the buses available. Slow, infrequent services lead to people choosing their cars over the bus, as demonstrated by mode share across Melbourne and parking pressures at railway stations.

While there has been significant patronage growth on some bus routes, this has chiefly been on the more direct, higher frequency 'SmartBus' services that the PTUA believes provide a template for bus reform in Melbourne and larger regional cities. In addition, the large growth in rail patronage since 2005 has largely saturated railway station parking supply and flowed through to greater use of feeder buses. That so many people still spurn feeder buses, despite (generally) no additional cost on top of their train journey, speaks volumes about the adequacy of the network.



Simply straightening each existing route in isolation from other routes could obviously have negative effects. Some areas might lose reasonable access to bus services, while other areas

may end up with wasteful duplication. Equitable and efficient bus route reform requires a *network-wide* perspective, as provided by competent planners that understand the need for competitive service levels and multi-modal integration.

This task would be made easier by tangible government support for tram and bus priority in traffic. This enables vehicles to traverse their routes more quickly, and—if these time savings are reinvested in higher service levels—also cut waiting times. The government must also be willing to fund additional services as it opens up more land for development around Melbourne's fringes.

Ultimately, few successful reforms are achieved without genuine community consultation that is open and honest about constraints, and that builds shared ownership of reform objectives. So far, unfortunately, the approach to consultation adopted by PTV largely mirrors that of the agencies responsible for the current dysfunctional route structure.

<http://www.ptua.org.au/2012/06/08/meandering-bus-routes>

PTV is not covering itself in glory

Since Public Transport Victoria's takeover of management of the network in April, the most visible changes are still the PTV signage at CBD tram and bus stops.

PTV is obviously still a work in progress, but it clearly lacks any great level of public participation.

Chief executive Ian Dobbs attended a PTUA Members' Meeting in May, and was kind enough to take many questions, as he has also done on talk-back radio. But public participation is not about the CEO running himself ragged—it should be a regular activity, occurring throughout the organisation.

While there has been a degree of consultation in some forthcoming projects (such as the Balaclava station upgrade),

in general there is still a lack of awareness about what PTV does, what changes are in progress and what is yet to come. In that sense, little has changed since the Department of Transport was running the show.

We have heard from many passengers who are confused about the new arrangements, because the 'one stop shop' message has not been publicised effectively, either to passengers or to front-line staff. Because of this, the advantages of the new system are not yet clear to anyone. Confusion will likely also reign as long as Myki remains outside PTV control.

Right now, the best level of community engagement is coming from single-mode private operators: Yarra Trams,

Dysons and Ventura buses all now run Twitter feeds to highlight service changes and disruptions, and are responsive to questions and feedback via that medium, or other forms of contact.

But no amount of public responsiveness by individual operators will compensate for an absence of coordinated network planning that listens to the community.

If PTV or its predecessors had, for instance, sought comments ahead of changes to bus routes for the opening of South Morang Station, they might not be facing community resistance to the changes—arising particularly from the loss of service along Mill Park Drive.

Community input is vital to a better-managed public transport network.

Court challenge to government: show us the Myki report

The ‘secret’ review by Deloitte, that led the Baillieu Government to reverse its opposition to Myki (a decision not fully explained), is now the subject of court action by Victorian Greens leader and upper house MP Greg Barber. Despite the report being of clear public

interest, the government has blocked its release, claiming that because it was tabled in Cabinet it is subject to Cabinet confidentiality.

Mr Barber commenced action in the Supreme Court in March, seeking a declaration that Parliament has the

power to order the public release of the report, as well as other documents that were prepared outside the Cabinet.

A hearing has been scheduled for 14 August. All are welcome to attend.

<http://vicmps.greens.org.au/content/barber-v-state-victoria>

RACV’s ‘Redspot’ survey looks like push polling

Most of us will be aware of the RACV’s ‘Redspot’ survey which runs every two years and was launched again in *Leader* newspapers across Melbourne in May.

Readers are invited to nominate “congested road locations and public transport services.” The latter is an apparent response to RACV members’ demands that more attention be given to public transport issues.

But how much does the survey really focus on public transport? And how much are people truly left to their own devices, and not ‘primed’ by the campaign objectives of the road lobby? In truth, it’s very little on either score.

The survey form is delivered free with local papers to hundreds of thousands of Melbourne households, and is available on the web (www.redspotsurvey.com.au). There is little real opportunity for people seeking an upgrade of public transport to have their say. The focus is exclusively on road congestion, rather than problems specific to public transport users such as long waits for services, trams blocked by right-turning cars, or excessive crowding.

While none of these other problems are explicit options on the form, it *does* provide the opportunity to describe a bus as a ‘blockage’, or to indicate that due to congestion you have been forced into the ignominy of switching to public transport, or cycling or walking. (Again the impression of ‘balance’ is given: you can, if you wish, state that congestion made you switch to driving a car. Of course in reality, when people give up on public transport, it is

for reasons that have nothing to do with road congestion—reasons you can only nominate in the ‘Other’ category.)

Some insight into why the RACV invests so much money and effort into this exercise each year may be gleaned from the *Leader* articles launching the campaign. For instance, the *Heidelberg Leader’s* coverage on 26 May asserted that “Roads Minister Terry Mulder said the North-East link was still being considered.” This project is, of course, a long-standing RACV objective.

The *Melbourne Leader* story on 23 May reminded readers that “The most infuriating section of road in the *Melbourne Leader* area in the 2010 survey was Hoddle St at the Eastern Freeway. . . The State Government is investigating various solutions for the area, including a rail link to Doncaster (with a study under way) and the contentious East-West road link between the Eastern and Tullamarine freeways.”

The Doncaster rail line has been mentioned here to give the impression of balance. Yet, if you take the view that rail to Doncaster or other improvements in public transport are indeed preferable to road construction, there is no way you can say so in the survey!

More tellingly, the *Manningham Leader’s* coverage of 23 May made *no reference to the Doncaster rail study at all*. It did, however, highlight road congestion at the roundabout on Fitzsimons Lane and Porter Street in Templestowe, with an RACV spokesman asserting that “There’s clearly an issue with sufficient capacity for crossing the (Yarra)

river and it results in these terrible conditions.” Again it should be no surprise that this assertion neatly reinforces the RACV’s longstanding campaign for the north-east freeway link.

The *Knox Leader* coverage on 23 May had bus lanes in its sights. It described the removal of bus lanes in Stud Road between Ferntree Gully Road and Kelletts Road as an “upgrade.”

Rather than being an objective gathering of public input, the Redspot survey is more akin to the political tactic of ‘push polling’. The essence of this is that the proponent backgrounds survey questions with carefully selected information which leads the respondent to a limited range of desirable conclusions.

That the RACV uses the Redspot survey as a tool to elevate its ongoing political campaign for road projects and funding over all else—despite its stated concern for public transport—is confirmed in the presentation of the 2010 survey results on the RACV website. It lists road congestion locations with commentary recommending additional road spending, but nothing of any real value for public transport.

Of course, the RACV exists to lobby for roads, and highlighting the ubiquity of road congestion is a tried and true campaign tactic (as long as no-one twigs to the fact that none of the road-building to date has made any difference). What the RACV should not be doing is representing themselves as champions of public transport, when their most sincere efforts are directed at road expansion that undermines public transport use.

Geelong Branch report

The supposedly imminent abolition of short-term tickets under the Myki system has greatly concerned the Branch ever since it was announced a year ago by the government.

Apart from the absurdity of not providing any short-term ticket option, the fact is that short-term tickets are currently used by over 60 per cent of Geelong bus passengers (as well as those in the other major regional cities).

Most passengers, many of whom do have Myki cards, obviously prefer to pay each time for what are often single journeys, or make use of the two-hour or daily options the short-term tickets provide, even at a slightly higher cost than the equivalent trips under Myki.



The government's decision is largely unexplained and it has refused to release the consultant's report on which its policy is apparently based. We have raised our concern about the abolition of our most popular ticket option with Terry Mulder a number of times, as well as with most of our local state MPs.

The Branch has suggested that the thermal printer in bus drivers' Myki consoles could be used to produce short-term tickets at a fraction of the 30 cent cost of each current short-term ticket.

Mr Mulder has rejected that idea because thermally-printed tickets "would not provide passengers with access to the same benefits as those using Myki". However the fact that thermally-printed tickets will not afford users some of the features of Myki, such as two hours of travel or a daily cap, might be an incentive for some of them to change Myki, but without the coercion and aggravation involved in summarily abolishing people's preferred ticket option.

We note that V/Line passengers are allowed to use their paper tickets to get

access to other parts of the public transport system, and that seems to place no noticeable extra burden on bus drivers or station staff. We also understand that it was recently decided that the emergency relief ticket to be issued by charities under the Myki system will be a single-use paper ticket.

Mr Mulder says the government is investigating alternative ticketing options for the "small number of people" who will not have Myki. It seems to us that the only alternative to a short-term ticket is some sort of short-term ticket!

The PTUA Geelong Branch meets monthly in Geelong city; see Page 2 for details. Paul Westcott is the branch convenor.



Clifton Hill lines not getting the right Metro treatment

The government and private operator Metro have made much of the value of 'sectorising' train lines from one another, to ensure problems on one line do not spread to others, and to create 'Metro-style' operations free of conflicts. Yet in practice, Metro avoids taking its own advice.

Ever since the 'Clifton Hill' group of lines (Hurstbridge and South Morang) were altered in 2009 to run clockwise around the City Loop all day on weekdays, these have provided an example of a truly sectorised line. Trains from Clifton Hill can now follow an unimpeded path direct to Flinders Street, around the Loop and back to Clifton Hill, without crossing itself or any other line. This ensures that the capac-

ity of the double track can be utilised to its maximum extent, and in particular means that Doncaster trains running every 10 minutes can be accommodated in addition to the services planned on this line up to 2020.

And yet, members report to us that this line is still not being operated in a properly sectorised fashion.

Trains timetabled to proceed around the loop often do not do so; instead they offload all their passengers at Flinders Street platform 14 (or elsewhere) and require them to walk to platform 1 to continue their journey. Access from platform 14 to platform 1 is awkward, with a narrow bottleneck not suited to large passenger flows.

On at least one occasion, a scheduled

City Loop service from Hurstbridge has proceeded from Flinders Street to Richmond instead, without any on-board announcement.

Of course, this is also a consequence of the unhelpful practice of treating Flinders Street as the terminus for all services, when most trains actually continue in the same direction. Usual practice in other cities is to treat city stations as just another stop, except when a service is actually scheduled to terminate there.

The point of a proactive planning authority, such as PTV was meant to be, is that operating practices are agreed and adhered to for the benefit of passengers, and not left entirely to the discretion of a private operator.

PT fare hikes in 2013 not the way to price carbon

On 1 July Australia joined about 30 countries, US states and Canadian provinces which apply some form of carbon price or tax.

Similar schemes are now under development or consideration in South America, South Africa, China and South Korea.

In Australia's case—and setting aside the acrimonious politics of carbon—there is an obvious flaw in our scheme requiring correction. This is the anomaly of including energy used by public transport, but not by cars. Another above-inflation fare hike is planned at the end of the year, and the carbon tax provides a handy pretext.

The government had a clear motive for exempting car fuel, based on its fear of the motoring lobby. Nonetheless, the

savings to households from excluding petrol are a mere fraction of the potential savings offered by improving alternatives to private motor vehicle use so that households can own fewer cars and use them less often (and thereby reduce their transport emissions).

Moreover, exempting one sector (such as private transport) simply increases the emission reductions required of other sectors, such as electricity, to meet what is still a bipartisan national target.

Public polling has shown that about three-quarters of Australians want the revenue from carbon pricing used to fund improvements to public transport, walking and cycling facilities. The PTUA therefore calls on both the State and Federal Governments to rebalance transport funding, to increase the appeal of public transport, walking and cycling

relative to private car use. This should equate to at least the amount PTV (on behalf of private operators and V/Line) will pay under a carbon tax. But it would preferably be based on ambitious service improvements and mode-shift objectives—beyond those already in place—and the funding allocations required to achieve them.

A practical short-term measure would be upgrading Melbourne's electrified rail network to take full advantage of regenerative braking. This technology provides large energy savings, which would partially offset the inequitable treatment of rail under the 'Clean Energy Future' legislation. But even more importantly, it would substantially reduce emissions from passenger transport, which is ultimately what we're all trying to achieve.

Vancouver points the way with network maps

Vancouver's planning agency TransLink has released a 'frequent network map' to highlight the core of its public transport network.

The map shows those services that run every 15 minutes or better, where this frequency is guaranteed until at least 9pm every day of the week, commencing at or before 6am on weekdays, 7am on Saturdays and 8am on Sundays.

The importance of such a map is that it highlights the routes of greatest value to new and infrequent users, land-use planners, and travellers to unfamiliar parts of the city. It also simplifies the view of the network for users in general.

This approach is one from which Melbourne could benefit. While it does not remove the need for detailed maps at a local level (which are still sorely lack-

ing), it would allow the provision of a city-wide network map that is not too complex for regular use.

Naturally such a frequent network map should also evolve as more routes are improved to the 'frequent' standard.

<http://www.translink.ca/en/Be-Part-of-the-Plan/Frequent-Transit-Network.aspx>

A letter to the PTUA

I can not understand how Metro can publish their ridiculous punctuality figures when they are obviously so fixed and loaded with irrelevant middle of the day, redirected trains and weekend trains.

Why are they getting away with it? In my whole life as a train traveller, here and in England, I have never seen a worse service. Why did they get rid of Connex?

I am not a negative person who is looking for fault and in fact in the past have defended the train system as OK. However, the current situation is absolutely terrible and EVERY DAY there is a problem. I feel a silent fury building up in me every time I use the train now and wish someone would stand up and represent us.

—David Buckley

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Responsibility for electoral comment in PTUA News is taken by Tony Morton, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne.