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News

Newsletter of the
Public Transport Users Association

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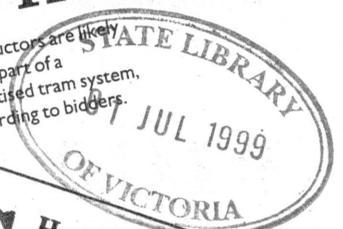
Connies' Float Wins First Prize in Moomba Parade

On Saturday night 13 March the Moomba Parade crowd gave the float of the energetic 'I Prefer a Tram Conductor' a tremendous reception. The glitzy presentation included that well-known media star 'Superconductor', disco dancing conductors riding the float and the public whipping of one of those 1970s 'Kelvinators' purporting to offer us long suffering commuters the joys of 'automatic ticketing'.

The PTUA congratulates the 'I Prefer a Tram Conductor' team for a wonderful event and their continuing devotion to this critical issue for the future of public transport. The PTUA made a small contribution to the considerable costs of the float. Any donations to their campaign will be passed on by the PTUA office.

Connies may get a ticket to ride again

Conductors are likely to be part of a privatised tram system, according to bidders.



Anger over firm's fare cheat claim



Evasion runs revenue off rails

Herald Sun
Sunday
Don't blame us

HOW dare Peter Fogarty call us cheats! Victorians are honest, genuine and generous, but they are not robots and they will not be bullied into embracing technology for technology's sake. It must work better than the cumbersome Metcard if they are to accept it. Instead of blaming the customers, Perth-based Mr Fogarty would be better advised to go back to the drawing board to fix his problem-riddled ticket system. His consortium gave us a lemon. If the State Government was not locked into it because of the looming privatisation of public transport, it would probably be dumped.

Connie power: "Super Conductor" Adrian Ferguson and float members. Photo courtesy of Leader Newspapers

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Keeping in touch...

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Please call the office for details.

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World Wide Web

Our home page is on Vicnet at
<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ptua/firstpt.htm>

Committee Members

Paul Mees — President

John McPherson — Vice President

Les Chandra — Secretary

Wendy Everingham — Treasurer

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Alan Hardie

Anthony Morton

Tim Hoffman

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Mary Jamieson

David Robertson

Tim Mattingsbrooke

Christina Sindt

Anna Morton

Vaughan Williams

PTUA Committee Plans for '99

The PTUA committee spent Saturday, 6th and Sunday, 7th February at the now traditional annual planning retreat. This year we travelled to Peterborough on the south-west Victorian coast near Port Campbell. Neva and Tony Finch hosted us at their recently built house overlooking the inlet of the Curdies River near the village. Neva Finch has been one of the longest serving members of the PTUA committee and received a PTUA life membership in thanks for her service.

The committee travelled down to Camperdown by the 8:40am Saturday West Coast Rail train and returned by the Sunday evening train. We used a small hired bus for local travel. Our female committee members stayed comfortably with Neva and Tony on Saturday night while the boys bunked down at a somewhat spartan caravan park. However a robust breakfast at Neva's got us over the vicissitudes of a typically wild and stormy night on the coast!

The spacious living area at the Finch's was perfect for the three discussion sessions during the weekend. The PTUA performance during 1998 was assessed as satisfactory within our resource constraints. The year came to a pleasing finale with the Scoresby Corridor EES Panel hearing where we felt our witnesses in favour of a public transport

solution – particularly Dr Robert Cervero from University of California at Berkeley – performed extremely well.

After examining all the possibilities for action in 1999 we chose to maintain the main thrust of the last couple of years:

- The strong focus on the Scoresby Corridor campaign will be continued. The north-south freeway Vicroads proposal represents all that is evil about current urban planning in Melbourne and presents a test case worth fighting and a basis for wider publicity and education;
- The two Citylink court cases with which the PTUA has a connection will continue to have our support. Members should be reassured that no financial penalties can accrue to the members or the committee personally from this involvement;
- The failures of the Onelink ticketing system along with the stripping away of station staff and tram conductors remains a strong focus for our efforts as does system privatisation. The PTUA view is that future public transport improvement will continue to be decided at the political level irrespective of privatisation. The forthcoming state election looms large in our plans for this reason;
- Generation of a larger membership base, as always, remains important.

Some local publicity was generated for the PTUA after Neva arranged for *The Warrnambool Standard* to provide a reporter and photographer to record our deliberations. We commented on the need for more frequent trains and buses in country Victoria. As has been the PTUA experience in the past we found little to praise on the West Coast train, in fact the interiors of the carriages we occupied were somewhat grubby and the onboard catering service left much to be desired.

Neva and Tony, though supposedly retired to the south west coast, literally slaved during the whole weekend to give the 15 plus members of the committee a wonderful visit to the dramatic and scenic 'shipwreck' coast. We can only thank them most warmly for a marvellous time and say how much we appreciate their continued interest and support for the PTUA.



Professor Cervero Makes an Impact

Professor Robert Cervero, lecturer in urban planning at the University of California at Berkeley and the world's leading authority on urban impacts of ring-freeways and edge-city development, presented expert evidence on behalf of the PTUA at the Scoresby EES panel hearings.

Dr Cervero's evidence formed the central plank of the case for alternatives to the Scoresby Freeway. He described the freeway's devastating impact on Melbourne's long term future as a liveable city, and also appeared for media interviews on radio and with newspapers.

Our star witness, Dr Cervero withstood energetic cross-examination from Department of Infrastructure lawyers trying to defend the indefensible while the hearing room overflowed with over 100 interested people.

Dr Cervero declined any payment for the exhausting journey made solely to save our future. He found Melbourne an agreeable city on previous visits and is concerned for our future if the motor car dominates our environment even more. He said that Melbourne had "a lot to protect and a lot to lose"

Dr Cervero shared his extensive international experience on the disastrous effects of orbital motorways particularly in American cities. He said

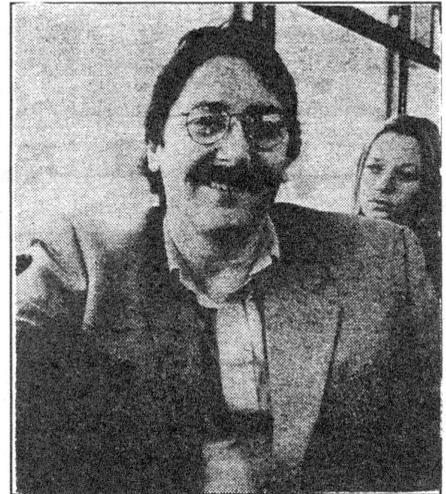
Melbourne had retained a strong centre but an orbital freeway would undermine the city centre as an employment and retail hub.

"You have an attractive city centre and you stand to unravel the core... we did that in the post war era and we're now suffering the consequences", he said.

The other expert witnesses who gave evidence at the enquiry on behalf of the public transport option were Dr Michael Buxton from RMIT, Mr John Dee from University of Western Sydney and PTUA president Paul Mees in his role as lecturer in transport planning. The hearings went for three weeks with much tedious technical presentation from the Infrastructure Department on the fine details of their freeway plans. Our presentation was somewhat more to the point and only took three days.

PTUA thanks supporters

The PTUA committee wishes to thank the many people who facilitated Dr Cervero's visit both financially and through their practical and moral support. The committee also thanks the total of nearly 40 community and environmental groups that joined with the PTUA in its submission. The report of the panel is expected to be released soon.



Professor Cervero, world authority on destructive impacts of ring-road and edge-city developments.

(Photo courtesy of Diamond Valley News)

The committee wishes to thank in particular:-

- Many PTUA members
- Many members of Environment Victoria
- Knox Environment Society
- Anti Ring Road Organisation
- Koonung Mullum Forestway Association

The generous donations received covered most of the expenses of the professor's visit.

Vaughan Williams

Ringwood meeting condemns freeways

Around 150 people attended a meeting in Ringwood on 24 February to demand alternatives to the Scoresby Freeway and the further extension of the Eastern Freeway. Speakers from the Koonung Mullum Forestway Association (which organised the meeting), the PTUA, Environment Victoria and the Gould League explained how precious the bushland threatened by the two free-

ways is and how realistic the alternatives. Motions were passed calling for a halt to works on the Eastern Freeway extension pending an Environment Effects Statement, and for Maroondah Council to withdraw from the Eastern Ring Road Steering Committee, which is lobbying for the Scoresby Freeway.

Paul Mees

PTUA Outer East Booklet Still Available

'MAKING
CONNECTIONS -
Environmentally
Friendly Transport for
Melbourne's Outer East'

For the full story on what transport improvements are needed in Melbourne's outer eastern suburbs and why the north-south freeway proposals are both misguided and disastrous. This 42 page report is essential reading for all PTUA members. Available from the PTUA office for \$5.00 plus \$1.00 postage.

Planning, Transport and Development Uncouple -

Post Modern Melbourne

At the same time as Planning, Transport and Roads ministerial portfolios were joined in a super ministry - Infrastructure, also came the final unravelling of coherent urban planning for Melbourne. In an almost Orwellian way, the apparent linking and therefore strengthening of the ministries actually marked a collapse in any influence that an overall planning strategy might have had for Melbourne's future.

Even the centrality of road building to a post-industrial future as seen by the disciples of Thatcherism seems to have lost its influence. Note that the grand project such as Citylink has taken over, yet for the health of the overall road system it may be just the piece of road that provokes a cycle of spiralling congestion that the ordinary road system feeding to and from Citylink near the already congested old heart of Melbourne cannot handle.

Similarly the grand Eastern Ring Road sounds dramatic yet already the authorities are struggling to show adequate benefit/cost ratios without a list of highly suspect assumptions. Many

more modest public transport projects for instance such as extensions to existing rail lines to outer residential areas can pass the test more easily and probably minor road projects such as level crossing elimination as well.

The blossoming Save Our Suburbs pressure group realises the threat of medium density development to older established suburbs but so far the contradiction between higher living densities in the core suburbs, plus the extra traffic from more local residents, plus the extra traffic already being blatantly encouraged to car-commute to the city (while ignoring the fitness of a quality public transport system for this role at far less environmental cost) has not been recognised at official levels it seems. If it has, the official response behind closed doors must have been a shrug of the shoulders.

Only this response seems possible when a TAFE college is to be established at the old Fairfield hospital site, over one kilometre walk from the nearest station while abandoning the Collingwood site three minutes from a frequent tram. The new Epping Hospital is 1.5 kilometres walk from the station while the abandoned PANCH hospital was close to tram and train with many buses passing the door.

New housing estates to the north of Melbourne confirm the official attitude.

Roxburgh Park established seven years ago was promised a station on the rail line that passes. Nothing has happened. Families buy a second and third car or remain isolated. Two new sprawling rural acreage subdivisions have been approved even further north,

Continued Anger in Melton and Sunbury over poor PT

With everyone's attention focussing on the outer east, transport issues in the outer west are often neglected.

People in areas like Sunbury and Melton are left to rely on infrequent diesel trains and even more woeful bus services. This is despite promises by governments of both colours to electrify both rail lines, made and broken at election after election since 1950.

In the meantime the rail lines on the other side of Melbourne are electrified as far as Cranbourne, Frankston and Belgrave all of which are as far or further from the city as Sunbury and Melton.

With growing urban development in both areas and along the rail lines at places like Sydenham and Deer Park, plus a new VUT campus at the old Sunbury asylum site, the rail services need urgent improvements to frequency, reliability and capacity. This must be backed up with REAL bus services, and genuine preparation for the electrification of both lines.

Vaughan Williams

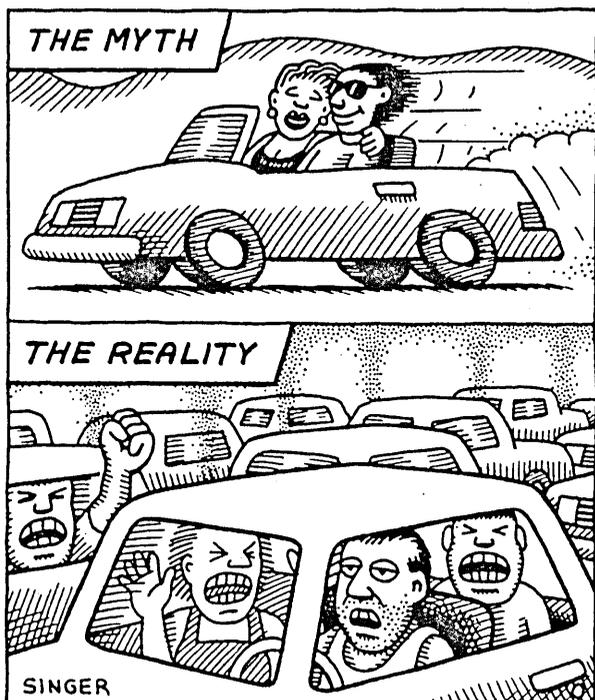


Illustration by Andy Singer

close to the Seymour rail line, but all access say the advertisements will be by car on the Hume Freeway - no mention of the train at all. The Melbourne metropolitan area is clearly well on the way to the extra low density US urban sprawl model that leads to incredibly high servicing and transport costs plus an environmentally unsustainable future, featuring the joys of beltway gridlock.

When Professor Robert Cervero points out the bonus and blessing our radial heavy rail network is, in enabling coherent future urban development, even the current post modern officials should listen and the politicians even more intently if they want to leave a legacy worthy of remembrance.

John McPherson

PTUA Yes to Broadmeadows Route

The Public Transport Users Association very much supports a Melbourne Airport Rail Link most recently advocated in *The Age* editorial of 15 March 1999 (see map above). A recent consultant's report to the Department of Infrastructure examines three alternative routes but finds the Broadmeadows route preferable. The Broadmeadows route appears superior to the PTUA because of low cost, better possibilities for integrating into the overall public transport system and because a reserve actually exists to the west from just north of Broadmeadows station. The reserve is in place to buffer existing residents from the flight path of noisy low-flying jets using the airport. This corridor seems ideal for modern low-noise electric trains on quiet, resilient welded rail track, with low noise-absorbing barriers if needed; much quieter than the current jet aircraft overhead.

Modern airports are huge traffic generators and most world cities are in-

tegrating their airports with rail-based public transport to avoid road network gridlock, noise and air pollution problems. In Australia both Sydney and Brisbane are working on integrating their main airports into the rail suburban train systems, with frequent trains to the centre of these cities. Airport and airline workers would form a significant proportion of users as would meeters and greeters of airline passengers. As a major activities hub, Tullamarine should become the focus of a comprehensive network of feeder buses for ordinary travellers in this public transport starved area of greater Melbourne. The trains should run express from Broadmeadows to the city and possibly to eastern suburbs. The whole public transport network would be available by interchange in the city.

The PTUA believes costs of the Airport Link have been overstated. Sufficient modern air-conditioned electric trains are available in the current fleet,

while some re-signalling for bi-directional running on the present double track Broadmeadows line would avoid the need for a new third express track to be built, as is currently proposed.

The PTUA does not believe new dedicated trains need to be built, but consideration could be given to providing one upgraded 'luxury' carriage in each train set with special higher fares - for airline passengers. These trains could run through to eastern suburbs where the bulk of airport passengers originate. The PTUA has advocated the Broadmeadows route for a number of years for the reasons set out above.

John McPherson

Fares will rise – GST enquiry

The Senate Enquiry into the Howard Government's tax reform is currently underway, with hearings taking place around the country.

As the tax package stands at present, the cost of car travel can be expected to fall. Conversely, public transport users face the prospect of fares rising by 10 per cent with the addition of the GST. As we all know this would undermine patronage setting off a downward spiral of service cutbacks and fare rises.

The PTUA put in our two cents worth with a submission presented by President Paul Mees and Committee Member Vaughan Williams. We are pushing for public transport fares to be zero rated to prevent the disastrous patronage decline which would be triggered by a rise in public transport fares

and the corresponding fall in the cost of car travel.

Paul told the enquiry that patronage would fall by five per cent in response to the rising fares, and that this was certain to lead to service cutbacks triggering further declines in patronage. This would continue the decline unless a government rescued the services with higher subsidies.

Our position is not being supported by any political parties at present and we urge all members to contact the Democrat Senator for Victoria, Lyn Allison, and tell her you want public transport exempted from the GST. You can write to her at 62 Wellington Pde, East Melbourne, or ring her office on 94161880

Vaughan Williams

Book Review

Book reviews are rare in PTUA NEWS but Bob Ellis's book 'First Abolish the Customer, 202 Arguments Against Economic Rationalism' published by Penguin Books Australia, Ringwood, 1998. deserves a mention.

In the section 'Follow the Thread' Bob describes the replacement of the traditional overnight train from Sydney to the Gold Coast by something more modern and economical. Brief extracts follow – 'This train went faster and shook a lot... it arrived at Casino ... not at 6.30am as it used to, but at 3.20am.' and then 'the people started to complain that they wanted the sleeper back.' After new less commodious sleepers were built at great expense, '... because the train was going much faster you couldn't sleep at all. You were flung about like one caught in a cement mixer.'

PTUA president Paul Mees can confirm the rough ride of the XPT sleepers as can a visiting US travel writer who used a 'washing machine' analogy in describing the discomfort. Thoroughly recommended reading.

John McPherson

Letters to the PTUA

Standing Up for Your Rights

I recently successfully defended myself at a magistrate's court, charged with not having a ticket on a train. The station where I should have bought the ticket was in fact open, but due to construction of a new 'customer service centre' I mistakenly thought the ticket office was closed. A contributor to my mistake was my poor eyesight. My defence was exactly based on the appeal letter I wrote, requesting that the infringement notice be withdrawn.

The court proceedings took some 90 minutes. People should not travel on public transport without a ticket, however the current system is full of pitfalls and I do encourage people to go to court to defend their integrity. Have faith in Australia's excellent judicial system.

Here are some of the lessons I learnt:

1. At the destination initiate the explanation why you do not have a ticket.
2. After receiving an infringement notice:
 - Purchase a ticket for your journey and keep this to present to the court.
 - Write an explanatory letter to the PTC.
3. Subpoena the PTC for any information relevant to your explanation. The magistrate's court will explain how to do this.
4. Do not succumb to accusations that you are guilty before the hearing.
5. Do not discuss anything with the prosecutor before the hearing.
6. Request that only one prosecution witness is in court at a time.
7. Cross-examine the prosecution witnesses to show you initiated the explanation. Follow the advice on cross-examination in the pamphlet issued by Victoria Legal Aid.
8. Tell the court why you did not have a ticket. Present the explanatory letter and ticket.

There are some really good people in the public transport system. However the Revenue Protection De-

partment should not be raising revenue in a manner analogous to car parking fines when criminal records are at stake. Officers do not state that there is an appeal process when issuing infringement notices. This information should be provided.

My unnecessary attendance at court was a system failure. There is no evidence that this failure on the part of the PTC was viewed as an opportunity to initiate improvement. The PTC also fails to actively seek feedback from its customers. The PTUA is the only way to deliver feedback.

Yours sincerely,
James Groombridge

A Tale of Two Systems

A recent trip on the XPT daylight trains to Sydney and then to the North Coast gave some interesting comparisons between the current Victorian and NSW rail systems.

Fair Fares

NSW Countrylink is offering significant promotional discounts. My full fare was \$61 - much less than my petrol cost had I gone by car. A sleeper would have cost \$150. These fares really begin to compete favourably with the car.

Full House

My train, as always, was fully booked. Nobody seemed to have thought of extra trains or cars to meet the demand that seems to exceed the supply. Perhaps we need a faster, full express service to Sydney an hour or so away from the present limited stops train, and adding extra cars when needed.

(The PTUA supports better frequency (say, every two hours) rather than a full express service. The minimal time saved by a full express service would be outweighed by the losses to the regional centres along the rail line - Ed)

Stops

We stopped at Benalla, Wangaratta and Albury and some quite small places in NSW, but not at Wodonga (is the agenda to derail this city already in effect?)

Along the Track

The track between Wagga and Sydney

twists and turns so that speed limits of 85kph or even slower veto the full speed (190kph) of which these trains are capable. On some beautifully maintained straight and level track we zipped along at close to top speed with rock-like steadiness and almost in silence. What time could be saved, and economies realised, if even a fraction of the freeway budget was applied to track realignment! There were also many more goods trains and private sidings serving trackside factories in NSW, while we saw none in Victoria. *(Realigning and repairing the track would also improve the movement of rail freight, reducing the number of trucks on the hume highway - Ed)*

An Aside

I opted for a short detour in Sydney which saw me on a Newcastle train at 7pm. Two Cityrail staff were very visible and patrolled the train the whole time I was on board. NSW stations seemed more fully staffed than is usual in Victoria.

Buses

Upon leaving the train at Urunga, I caught a school bus into town. In NSW it seems usual for school buses to also take regular passengers. It seems an obvious thing to do in Victoria.

What next?

The XPT trains have obvious good points but are already a few years old. Now that Victoria has sprinters, and with talk of TGV, we might see little further investment in this generation of trains. However, the present XPT services could be significantly improved, given the will, at modest cost and with useful benefits.

Single sleeper cabins were much in demand in the Southern Aurora and its downgraded successor. The XPT's have only twins. A single traveller is booked to share a cabin with another of the same gender. This arrangement may deter many people, possibly a significant, untapped market.

Norm Melford

Gippsland Commuters Suffer

The alterations indeed downgrading of commuter services to the Gippsland line introduced late last year beyond Dandenong, to Pakenham and through to Warrigal and Traralgon have predictably been a fiasco. The plan was to use 40 year old 'Bluebird' railcars hired from their now private owner in South Australia to replace through V/Line trains to Flinders St station with shuttle trains connecting with suburban trains at either Pakenham or Dandenong.

Firstly the railcars are claimed as overhauled but have not entered service because of continued unreliability on tests. Both original railcars have been exchanged for others. Apparently the

transmission system gearboxes are the weakest link.

Secondly the remaining through services have become overcrowded in a major way. Commuters are of course also abandoning the trains for their cars. The popular 6pm departure from Flinders St is now a Met train to Pakenham with shuttle beyond. The trip is now 20mins. longer on average and more stops have been added on the Met part of the journey. In the hot weather since New Year the Met train has almost invariably been a non-air-conditioned Hitachi set over the longest trip on the suburban system. Trains have run up to 40 minutes late. The through 7am depar-

ture to Melbourne from Pakenham is full to standing but since Christmas has developed the habit of a 10 minute wait in Flinders St yards most mornings.

Brian Hogg who travels from Garfield supplied much of the above information. He comments that when V/Line ran the complete service major delays were rare. Brian and other regular commuters are endeavouring to apply pressure to the Transport Minister and the government. These changes to the service are all the more surprising on the eve of privatisation when the predictable drop in patronage surely makes the line less saleable. Brian can be contacted via the PTUA office.

John McPherson

In Brief

Conductors return

The public transport authority in the Swedish capital, Stockholm has advised the PTUA that after an absence of two years, conductors have returned to all their trams. Unsurprisingly this was done for exactly the same reasons that conductors are needed back in Melbourne - fare evasion, security for passengers, passenger information and vandalism control.

Glenferrie - Vicroads victim

Regular public transport users will know how often tram and bus stops are moved to less convenient locations to facilitate Vicroads schemes to increase the capacity of intersections on main roads. Passengers find this particularly irritating where connection opportunities exist between different services. To miss the usually infrequent connection because of a long walk frustrated further by the usual long waits at intersection traffic signals indicates the third class status of public transport users all too

clearly. At Glenferrie station where trains and trams have connected conveniently for 100 years Vicroads has seen fit to move the tram stop 120 metres down the hill to the site of new traffic signals for a side street. The loss of passenger convenience would not have entered the engineers' heads.

The more, the tardier

The latest figures on the performance of the privatised UK rail system has found yet another fall in overall reliability and punctuality by the train operating companies. There are 26 in total!

All change - secretly

A National Bus user from Kew travelling to RMIT daily has studied the NBC performance during their recent major timetable changes introduced on 9 March. No advertisements appeared on radio or press before the change. Timetables were not available on buses and buses were still running incorrect routes and times even one and a half weeks after change. Two drivers confirmed they

had no briefing let alone training for new routes. The NBC internet site has no information.

ROSS HOUSE OPEN DAY Tuesday 18th May 1999 ALL WELCOME

The Ross House Open Day will have two central themes this year - the International Year of Older Persons and the 100th Anniversary of the opening of our historic building.



community and self help groups
surf the internet
enjoy natural therapies
entertainment, music, drama
information displays, stalls, videos
public forums

10am - 4pm, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne

Please call 9650 1599 for info

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John McPherson, Vaughan Williams and Tony Fuery.

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