

TRANSIT NEWS AND VIEWS

Newsletter of the Public Transport Users' Association Inc
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Editorial

Progress does not come naturally — it has to be fought for. Although we are continually talking to the transport authorities and politicians about them, the trials and tribulations of the public transport passenger remain; like the poor (as the saying goes), they are always with us. It requires infinite patience to maintain the dialogue, and enormous optimism to expect eventually to see some light at the end of the tunnel.

But things are happening behind the scene, which pass unnoticed by the passenger in the seat. The new Epping train depot is nearing completion, for example, and the Preston tram workshops are being extensively modernised. V/Line has built a new maintenance depot near Spencer Street for country carriages. We should expect to see the results of better maintenance in the years to come, with greater reliability, and (dare we hope?) cleaner trains.

One response to vandalism and graffiti on trains and stations has been the suggestion that vigilante groups be set up to police trains. Whilst the PTUA understands the concern of the travelling public for the conditions in which they travel, we do not support the formation of vigilante groups.

Our position in this matter has been for a long time that guards must patrol trains, particularly at off-peak times, and the Transit Patrol needs to spread itself more thinly over the rail system, so that every train sees an officer at least once on each trip.

The installation of video cameras at rail stations is a good move, doubly so if bicycle storage can be kept under surveillance too.

Attention Epping, Hurstbridge and Sandringham Line Passengers!

Members using these lines are advised that new timetables will come into force on 21st May, incorporating some major changes. In future, we hope to be able to give members more notice of such changes.

General Meeting

The next general meeting of the Association will

be held at Ross House, 247-251 Flinders Lane (between Swanston and Degraives Streets), Melbourne, on Wednesday 21st June at 5.30pm.

Members are advised to arrive a few minutes early, because the door to Ross House is locked at 5.30pm, and latecomers will need to be let in by someone inside the building.

We expect to discuss V/Line services, the greenhouse effect, and other topics suggested by members. Free tea, coffee and biscuits will be served.

Help Us to Help You

As a result of a number of meetings over the last six months (see reports below), the Met and V/Line are giving the PTUA the opportunity to present our views on a number of issues. Our members are our eyes and ears, so we are anxious to receive your observations and views on the following:

- performance of the Met system: we now have the chance to raise members' complaints at regular meetings with Met Marketing;
- what needs to be done to country (V/Line) services (see p. 5 of March TN&V);
- the changes you would like to see incorporated in the forthcoming reviews of timetables for the Belgrave/Lilydale and Frankston/Dandenong lines.

Please send all comments and suggestions to the Secretary, Box 324, Collins Street P.O.

Office Premises

We have been accepted for tenancy on the ground floor of Ross House, at 247-251 Flinders Lane. At our May Council meeting, we decided to take up tenancy.

Ray Walford

Meetings with MTA Management

General Topics

As foreshadowed in the March newsletter, Association officers met senior executives of the Metropolitan Transit Authority on 15th March. The Association's President, Secretary and Public Relations Officer, and the Met's Managing Director (Kevin Shea), and the three chief general managers, Laurie Harkin (Operations), Graham Swift (Engineering), and Norm Walker (Resources) were present.

Although (we are pleased to report) the meeting took place in a cordial atmosphere, the general impression of the Association officers was that not a great deal was accomplished. The following major items were discussed.

Central Area Public Transport

The \$400,000 study of central area public transport proposed in the C.A.T.S. draft Final Report (reported last issue of *TRANSIT NEWS AND VIEWS*) was raised. We indicated that the Association is anxious to be closely involved in the study and, in particular, in a trial of improved off-peak services proposed by the Transport Minister during a meeting with the P.T.U.A. Met officials seemed unaware of both projects. We will take both matters back to Mr. Kennan.

New Fare Structures

The Met confirmed what we have suspected for some time: that the new fare system will follow the 'three concentric zones' model first introduced by the Liberal Government in 1980. We pressed for a more radical reform, but were told that finances and government policy ruled out such measures.

Safety

A number of safety issues were discussed, including surveillance of stations, roving guards and cars passing stationary trams. The Met reported a number of initiatives taken in these areas, including the installation of cameras at Frankston and Ringwood stations (and Richmond soon). Roving guards will be introduced when doors have been cut in the ends of motor units of trains. Flashing warning lights are being considered for trams.

Service Standards

The Met management freely admitted that there has been a serious deterioration in rail service standards over the last few months, due in large part to the recent floods, industrial unrest and staff shortages. We gained the impression that the Met management sees itself as powerless to alter the situation, although we remain convinced that most problems are due to inattention and incompetence in various quarters. We requested the restoration of radio announcements of train cancellations, and are still waiting for a response.

Timetable Revisions

Most progress was made on the issue of consultation over timetable changes. It was agreed that a meeting would be held with Metrail to make arrangements for this to occur (see separate article).

Retention of 'W' Class Trams

We suggested to the Met that old 'W' class trams not be scrapped, but be kept on stand-by for emergency use: the disused Hawthorn depot could be used for storage. The Met denied that 'W' class trams are being scrapped.

Private Bus Dispute

In conclusion, we argued for a more conciliatory approach to the handling of the long-running dispute between the Met and the private bus operators. Our views were 'noted'.

Further meetings are anticipated.

Paul Mees



National Transport Conference

The 1989 National Transport Conference is being held in Melbourne in May. As part of the Conference, three forums are being conducted at which non-registrants can attend (at no cost). Here are the details:

A National Plan

This forum is titled: 'Transport to the year 2000: do we need a National Plan?' This forum would be an ideal place to discuss the Very Fast Train and interstate rail generally.

Time: 4pm

Date: Thursday, 25th May 1989

Place: Regent Hotel,
25 Collins Street,
Melbourne.

Users' Forum

This forum is titled: 'Community involvement in transport decisions.' (It sounds as if it has been designed with the PTUA in mind!) The topics for discussion suggested by the organisers include the following:

- Transport Decision Making
- Road Safety
- Road and Public Transport Planning
- Public Transport
- Traffic Congestion
- Freight Movement
- Parking
- Other transport issues.

Time: 7pm - 9pm

Date: Wednesday, 24th May 1989

Place: Regent Hotel,
25 Collins Street,
Melbourne.

Road Safety : 'Forum on Road Safety'

Time: 2pm

Date: Wednesday, 24th May 1989

Place: Regent Hotel,
25 Collins Street,
Melbourne.

Upfield Update

The public meeting at Brunswick Town Hall on 21st March was attended by some hundreds of people. Not one had a good word to say for the Met's proposals for the Upfield corridor. Speakers from resident groups and unions, and the PTUA Secretary (Paul Mees) condemned the proposals.

The Met has now terminated its 'consultation' process in the area, and will appoint private consultants to carry out the task. The Association and the City of Brunswick are pressing for a process modelled on the successful Powerline Review Panel. We are still waiting for a concrete proposal from the Met.

Further confusion has been created by the announcement by Coburg MLA Peter Gavin of another 'option': light rail, with a shuttle tram service in Sydney Road, between Brunswick Road and Bell Street. The Association remains sceptical of this proposal as well, since it addresses none of the concerns of Upfield train users. We also believe that the shuttle service would be of inferior quality, with low frequency and limited hours of operation.

In fact the tram shuttle would be a wasteful and expensive duplication of the light rail service. How odd that the Met could consider rectifying the imagined duplication of the train and tram services with two services that would clearly duplicate one another! It just shows how desperate someone must be to kill the Upfield line!

Paul Mees



IMRA Backs PTUA

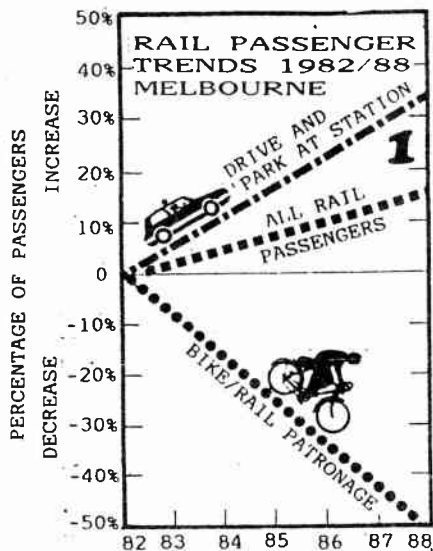
The Inner Metropolitan Regional Association (IMRA), which represents local government in the inner part of Melbourne, has given full backing to the PTUA's stand on CATS (Central Area Transport Strategy), and is using our conference paper (to be presented to the 1989 National Transport Conference) as an appendix to its submission.

Protecting Open Spaces

The PTUA is taking a consulting role with the group formed to oppose the extension of the Eastern Freeway along the Koonung and Mullum Mullum Creeks to Ringwood, and other planned developments in public open spaces. A rally will be held at Nunawading Arts Centre on June 6th to raise public awareness and support for this issue. Paul Mees will be speaking on behalf of the PTUA.

Bicycle Blues

The transport minister, Mr Kennan, states that there has been a 15% increase in Met patronage since Labor came to office (Age 6/3/89). Over the same period there has been a 50% decline in the number of people cycling to Met railway stations (see graph). Why is this so?



Since 1981, bicycle sales have increased by 8.5% annually, and there are now 500,000 Melburnians over 14 years of age using bicycles for exercise, recreation and shopping, but not to ride to stations. Yet, while only 15% of Melburnians live within walking distance of a station, 85% live within easy cycling distance.

The fact is that the high risk of theft is discouraging the use of bicycles to access rail stations. Last year, 630 bicycles were reported stolen from rail stations, bringing the total over the last six years to 3960. The true figure is closer to 5000, since not all thefts are reported to police.

The impact of theft on patronage has been devastating: in 1981, a VicRail survey showed that 2,200 rail patrons cycled to the station: by 1988 the figure had fallen to only 950. If the trend in the years up to 1981 had continued, there would have been at least 4000 bike-rail patrons today, with the potential for even greater increases in the future.

In Japan, metropolitan rail systems have gained three million bike-rail patrons in the last 15 years, because patrons are provided with theft-proof bicycle storage facilities.

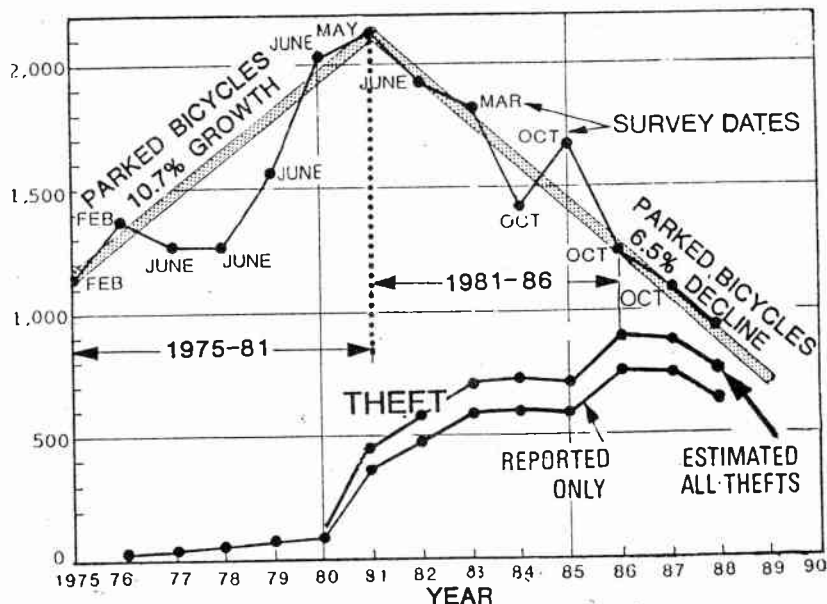
In Melbourne, there are around 150 bicycle lockers in working order. Unfortunately, many are a few years old, and their inferior construction means that they are corroding away. In Sydney, there are privately leased lockers which do not suffer from this problem, since they are made from plastic and zinc-coated steel.

In accordance with the recommendations of the 1986 Met Bicycle Facilities Report, a lock-up cage with internal locking devices was designed. Cages can be batch-produced to provide bicycle storage at around one third the cost of lockers. Yet implementation of the design has been put on the 'backburner' by Met engineers.

In 1987, the Met installed 900 new, bolt cutter-proof chains and lock shields on station platform fence posts. Most are not being used, owing to the inconvenience of the design and a lack of publicity about their use. During 1988, a new design was tested with a panel of cyclists, but has still not been installed.

The success of the Japanese experience shows that the Met needs to lift its performance in this area. What is needed is the formation of a station parking policy that emphasises the importance of cycling, then a follow through, step by step, of the necessary implementation measures. The potential for patronage growth is enormous.

Condensed by Paul Mees from an article by Alan Parker



City Tollgates

The Italian city of Florence is introducing a toll for all motorised vehicles entering the historic city centre. The charge will be 5,000 lire plus an administrative charge of 1,500 lire (that's about \$6.00 in total), and will be collected at 14 gateways into the city centre.

Meeting with MTA Marketing Director

In response to an invitation from the MTA's Director of Marketing, Margaret Douglas, to discuss a proposal by the Met to ban eating and drinking on Met vehicles, Public Relations Officer Patrick O'Connor and Council member Graham Gibson duly met Ms Douglas on 20th April.

Our Association appreciated the invitation. In what was a preliminary and useful exchange of views, the PTUA made the following points:

1. The motive and aim to have cleaner vehicles is most desirable;
2. The smell of certain hot foods (e.g. dim sims) can be offensive to some passengers;
3. The policing of regulations in 'grey areas' could be difficult;
4. The PTUA would support the introduction in Victoria of deposit legislation for drink containers, as a measure which would reduce the litter problem. (Such legislation already exists in South Australia.)

Members' views on this issue are sought.

The opportunity was also taken to discuss a wide range of service complaints, including 4 consecutive months' reports of late running prepared by Malcolm Higgs.

Patrick O'Connor



Union Commended

Recently the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen held a meeting of all *off duty* members at Batman Avenue to formulate a union response to the problem of graffiti on trains. Public Relations Officer, Patrick O'Connor contacted the Federal and State Secretaries of the union to praise the members for avoiding inconvenience to the public. In our opinion, this makes their campaign far more effective.

The Transport Amendment Bill

The Victorian Government has introduced a Bill into parliament to amend the Transport Act to bring about the amalgamation of V/Line and the Met, forming the Public Transport Corporation, and the RCA and RTA to form the Roads Corporation.

On Wednesday 12th April, the President, Secretary and Public Relations Officer met the National Party's Victorian transport spokesman (John McGrath) at Parliament House to discuss aspects of the Bill. The main concerns of the National Party are:

- a fear of domination of the Public Transport Corporation by Metropolitan interests, and
- the proposed high level of representation by union members on the new board.

The PTUA's chief worry was the apparent abolition of the user representatives from the new board (there are currently two user representatives, one on the STA board, the other on the Met board). However, this seems to have been a genuine mistake, and as a result of a call to the Minister's secretary by Paul Mees, the mistake is to be rectified.

The PTUA is also concerned about the increase in relative strength of union representation on the new board. What we are suggesting is that two of the four union representatives be replaced by two representatives of local government, one representing rural Victoria, the other metropolitan Melbourne. This view has been conveyed to the Liberal Party's transport spokesman, Alan Brown.

Paul Mees and Ray Walford

Your Views Welcomed

Thanks are due to those members who have responded to our call in the last newsletter for ideas and suggestions on the Central Area Transport Strategy (CATS) and the Very Fast Train (VFT) proposal. The consultation period for CATS is now over, and we await the publishing of the final report. The VFT issue is still very much alive, however, with the expectation that a public inquiry will be called by the Victorian Government.

It is vital that the Council members remain in touch with the views of the general membership on important issues. One way of achieving this is for members to attend our general meetings, the first of which was held in April. Our next general meeting will be held in June (see separate announcement for details). Another way is for you to write a letter to the Editor for publication in *TRANSIT NEWS AND VIEWS*, or a letter to the Secretary.

Cheerless, filthy and very risky, the typical ride

By INNES WILLOX

Stepping around a pile of vomit clumsily covered by a sodden newspaper, we got on the 10.44 at Glenhuntly. At the next station, we were forced out by the overwhelming stench and the sight of the kissing couple who had followed us on board and entwined themselves across the seat in front.

For Paul Mees, secretary of the Public Transport Users Association, the 10.44 from Glenhuntly was typical of the Saturday-night problems for Melbourne's trains. It was poorly used, had been vandalised, and was too big and too slow.

"The system's image is worse than it really should be," he said with a shrug. "It's illogical to think that just because stations and trains are dirty and people are standing around drinking that we are automatically going to be physically unsafe. But I can understand people's apprehensions."

Later at South Yarra, one of the hubs of Melbourne's nightlife, we got off a train with six others and tramped gloomily up to Toorak Road. "Where are all the people?" Mr Mees asks.

"There should be people streaming in and out of here, but it's as dead as a doornail. All you get are a few kids and old people, and certainly none of the beautiful young things that frequent South Yarra. They wouldn't be seen dead on a train."

Under-age drinkers were everywhere. There was an occasional old person, but families were a rare sight. The reason trains lose money on a Saturday, Mr Mees believes, is that children use their school passes or pay only a one-third fare.

"The best passengers are old-age pensioners because they don't have cars. But as you can see, there are none of them here. They are too scared to catch the train at night."

At Newport station, we stuck our heads out the window to look at a dark and empty station. Nobody got on or off. "If anybody did try anything on you here, there is nowhere to go. That makes it unattractive to old people and women," he said. "I always assume I can run quickly enough, but not everybody could do it."

Mr Mees, who uses public transport up to five times a day, admits he does not like travelling on trains at night. Stations stained with graffiti, slashed seats that have been covered by a jumble of tartan, checked and striped cloth, the typical passenger and the 30-minute wait between trains are the main reasons for his fears.

"There is no cheerfulness about them," he said. "But if you go out on a tram at this time of night, it can be quite a pleasant experience with people talking to each other. You just don't do that on these things."

His remedies include a more frequent service, smaller trains, video surveillance from a manned control booth at all stations, and police patrols on each train.

"They can run trains properly just about everywhere in the world except Melbourne," Mr Mees said. "I just think they are not properly motivated. The major criticism of the Government is not that they are doing nothing, but that they are doing things incredibly tentatively that should have been done across the board 20 years ago."

There had been several examples of the train system working to its full potential, including at the royal shows and after the papal Mass at the MCG in 1987, he said. "When the system works well, it's fantastic. The depressing thing is that it doesn't run well too often."

The Age, 6th March 1989

'No' to light-rail

A PUBLIC meeting in Brunswick attended by almost 500 people has voted unanimously to reject the Met's light-rail proposal.

The meeting also voted for a campaign action committee to be established to organise a demonstrations and other protests.

Convened by the Save the Upfield Line Committee, the Brunswick Town Hall meeting gave clear backing for retaining and upgrading the Sydney Rd trams and Upfield line trams.

Four speakers opposing the introduction of light-rail addressed the meeting. Their optimism that residents could save their public transport system were greeted with cheers.

Most residents left after they had voted for the retention and improvement of existing transport services.

Only 100 people remained to vote on whether the meeting should approach unions to place a black ban on any works to remove the trams or Upfield trains. That motion was passed by a margin of five votes.

'Wrong before'

Public Transport Users' Association secretary Mr Paul Mees told the meeting not to be intimidated by the Met and Transport Ministry.

"They've been wrong before, and they're certainly wrong this time," he said.

He warned people not to be tricked by compromises, such as the fourth option Mr Kennan had introduced — light-rail with a tram shuttle service from Brunswick Rd to Bell St, Coburg.

"That sort of thing can create division, and there is no better way to conquer people than when they are divided," he said.

The Brunswick Sentinel, 27th March 1989

The Sun, 18th April 1989

Tram priority the fair way to go

THE Liberal transport spokesman, Alan Brown, and the RACV have grossly overreacted to State Government plans for improving tram priority measures (Apr 4).

Their concern for motorists' needs is commendable, but surely tram passengers have rights too.

The effect of a 210 mm (8 in) tram separator from car traffic in wide streets like St Kilda Rd would be negligible.

But the benefits for tram passengers (who outnumber motorists three to one on that route) would be enormous.

Trams operate most efficiently when separated from traffic.

Effective separation can cut travel times by up to half. The RACV alternative — tram-activated traffic signals —

has been tried and found wanting.

It simply doesn't stop cars from blocking tram tracks.

The Public Transport Users' Association has for some years been demanding tram separation from motor traffic on wider streets.

At last, the authorities are doing something.

Detection cameras are a natural complement to these measures.

Law-abiding motorists have nothing to fear from them.

If, as a result of the increase in tram speeds, some motorists decided to leave their cars at home, this would be a cause for celebration, not concern.

Making a shift to public transport essential are problems such as the greenhouse effect, the rising road toll and the



● Alan Brown... concern.

effects of increasing dependence on imported oil on Australia's balance of payments.

Measures to encourage such a shift should be welcomed.

— Paul Mees
secretary
Public Transport Users'
Association
Melbourne

Light Rail Patronage

Those concerned with the future of the Upfield train and North Coburg tram services, and the fate of the Clarendon Street bridge should study closely a recent survey of patronage on the St. Kilda and Port Melbourne light rail.

The survey, from MTA research data, reveals a significant loss of patronage on both light rail lines at peak periods.

line	a.m. peak	p.m. peak
Port Melbourne	-30%	-28%
St. Kilda	-4%	-27%

Before these services were converted to light rail, and cut off from Flinders Street station, patronage on the St. Kilda line was increasing. The proud boast by the MTA that the light rail lines have experienced a 9% growth in daily trips (826 trips per day) has to be evaluated against the fact that patronage on the 10/12 and 15/16 tram routes has fallen by a similar number (900 trips per day).

Millions of dollars of capital expenditure, urgently needed to improve run-down services, has been wasted on an ill-conceived and flawed exercise, which merely substitutes inferior services for no net gain in patronage, and effectively isolates resident and commuter populations of the areas served from direct access to Flinders Street.

Patrick O'Connor



Other Decisions of Council

We will reduce significantly the free mailing list for our newsletter, to save money on postage (about \$100 a year).

We will seek funding from the Transport Minister at our next meeting with him.

If the PTUA gains the User Representative position on the board of the new Public Transport Corporation, half of the salary (expected to be about \$10,000) will be donated to the PTUA.

A leaflet campaign will be run on the Upfield corridor.

Family membership (\$20) will be introduced, and Corporate Membership will be re-introduced.

Reciprocal advertising for the PTUA will be sought with other bodies, such as the Conservation Council of Victoria.

Train Timetable Revision

On the 6th April, officers of the Association met the Chief General Manager of Operations, Laurie Harkin, and the Director of Rail Operations, David Watson, to discuss how the PTUA could be involved in the process of timetable revision, with a view to commenting on the proposed changes, and perhaps influencing the outcome. The Met agreed to consult the PTUA before future rail timetable changes are implemented. This pleasing victory is the result of a long campaign by Association officers, particularly David Bowd.

Examples of the sorts of concerns we might address are connections, waiting times, and crowding.

The revision process is very lengthy, taking up to 6 months, and is done on a group basis (e.g. Caulfield group of lines). Revision of timetables has already been completed for the Hurstbridge, Epping and Sandringham lines, which will be put into effect in May; it is too late to influence these decisions.

The next groups of lines to be revised are Ringwood (Belgrave, Lilydale) and Caulfield (Frankston, Dandenong). The Ringwood review will be concerned with peak-time crowding; the Caulfield review will address the issue of access from outlying areas such as Berwick. We hope to be involved in these revisions, through future meetings with Met management, and we are looking for information from our members to help us in this process.

One of the concerns we expressed was that access from outer suburbs to District Centres such as Camberwell is being down-graded by an over-emphasis on fast access to the CAD (the city).

Paul Mees and Ray Walford

New Members

We welcome the following new members:

Dr A. Abramson, East Bentleigh
Ms R. Cervini, Cheltenham
Goongerah Community Forum, Orbost
Mr B. Jones, Garfield North
Ms L. Jones, Garfield North
Ms F. L. King, Prahran
Mrs D. Millington, Brunswick
Ms J. Scott, East Melbourne
Dr J. J. Shepherd, West Brunswick
Mr J. Smoljo, Brunswick
Mr L. J. Worland, Murrumbeena
Mr A. J. Rhyder, Watsonia.

It is particularly encouraging to see more women joining our Association; perhaps some of you can be persuaded to stand for Council at the next AGM?

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Transit News and Views is edited
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Council Executives

President	Ray Walford
Vice President	Doug Sherman
Secretary	Paul Mees
Treasurer	David Bowd
Public Relations	Patrick O'Connor

Association Patrons

We are pleased to announce that the following distinguished citizens have agreed to become Patrons of the Public Transport Users' Association:-

The Hon Frank Crean
Dame Phyllis Frost, D.B.E.
The Hon Sir Rupert Hamer, K.C.M.G., E.D.,
(Hon) L.L.D. (Melb), L.L.M.
Councillor Winsome Mc Caughey

Patrick O'Connor,
Public Relations Officer,
P.T.U.A.