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The Public Transport First campaign in Aston



The PTUA teamed up with Knox Environment Society, Environment Victoria, the Koonung Mullum Forestway Association and other groups to raise the profile of public transport in the Aston by-election, held on 14th July.

Our objective was to demonstrate to the 'major parties' that public transport is a vote-winner in the outer suburbs. In order to make things easy for them, we asked candidates to commit to funding public transport as the first priority, rather than opposing the Scoresby Freeway outright. This tactic has worked well in Western Australia, where the new State government has halted freeway building and has diverted funds to expanding the rail system.

We offered to direct preferences to either of the major parties if they backed our demands. The Liberals dealt themselves out of contention early on by announcing partial funding for the Scoresby Freeway. We tried unsuccessfully to interest Labor, but they refused to back public transport and so lost the by-election. Had they received our preferences, they would have won.

The parties that did back public transport - the Democrats, Independent candidate Garry Scates, the Greens and Liberals for Forests - polled 16 per cent of the vote, a swing of almost 10 per cent. This was a fantastic result, and Democrats leader Natasha Stott-Despoja showed her gratitude by wearing a Public Transport First badge during her election night speech.

The Public Transport First campaign involved a tremendous amount of effort. Each of the 45,000 houses in the electorate was letterboxed at least once, and many were done twice. We held a well-attended meeting in Rowville, and dominated coverage in the local media. All polling booths were covered on polling day, although we found it difficult to make headway on the day, thanks to the 'Melbourne Cup' field of candidates and the huge number of how-to-vote cards. We also found it difficult to get coverage in *The Age* and on the ABC, although readers of the *Sydney Morning Herald*

were kept informed thanks to senior political reporter Margo Kingston.

The most difficult decision we faced was who to put first on our how-to-vote card. Knox Mayor Garry Scates backed the Public Transport First cause very strongly at the Rowville public meeting and those who attended were unanimous in their view that we should back him. Scates wanted the freeway as well, but opposed the plan to part-build the freeway and supported the diversion of the Federal funding announced by the Howard government to public transport. Although his view on the freeway was not the same as ours, he had met our minimum demands. So we placed him first, then the Greens, then the Democrats. Some Greens members were very upset at this decision, which is understandable. But while many PTUA members are personally sympathetic to the Greens, we are a non-political organisation and don't play 'favourites'.

At its July meeting, the PTUA committee decided that we should carry the Aston campaign forward into the Federal election. The other Public Transport First member groups share our determination, so readers will be hearing more about Aston soon. In the meantime, thanks and congratulations to the large group of PTUA members who put in such a fantastic effort in the campaign. Special thanks are due to our 'field-marshall' Hayden Jones.

PTUA 25th Anniversary

Did you know that the PTUA turns 25 this year? Founded as the Train Travellers Association in 1976, it has since become Victoria's foremost public transport advocacy association. To celebrate, a 25th anniversary celebration will be held in conjunction with our Annual General Meeting, proposed for late September. Further details in the next PTUA News.

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Keeping in touch...

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Paul Mees – President
Anna Morton – Vice President
Vaughan Williams – Secretary
Les Chandra – Assistant Secretary
Daniel Borowski – Treasurer

Glen Boyce	Anthony Morton
John Cox	Miriam Powell
Roberto D'Andrea	Tim Petersen
Hayden Jones	David Robertson
Tim Mattingsbrooke	

Committee Meetings

Third Tuesday of each month.
Please call the office for details

PTUA slams Bourke St tram removal plan

The Public Transport Users Association has attacked plans that would remove trams from the Bourke Street Mall. The proposal, which has the backing of the Melbourne City Council and major retailers, would see trams terminate in the city or deviate via Lonsdale Street. The PTUA says that the change would increase tram travel times and inconvenience passengers.

Over 70 000 tram passengers travel through the Bourke Street Mall each day. The mall is the premier retail district in Australia, commanding the highest intensity of visitors, retail turnover and shop rentals. The PTUA is puzzled that mall retailers would wish to drive such a large number of potential customers away from their doors.

The Bourke Street proposal flies in the face of trends in other cities, which have introduced transit malls to revitalise city centres and reduce car dependence.

Experience in both Bourke Street and other transit malls overseas (eg Zurich's Banhoffstrasse) has shown that pedestrians can safely coexist with trams. Accident statistics bear this out, with no fatalities or serious injuries being reported in the mall's 25-year history.

Tram travel times, which have already lengthened due to increasing car traffic, would increase further due to the four extra turns that would be required under the plan. The popular 86 and 96 routes would become less direct and thus less attractive to passengers. In addition, the extra time to complete the slower route would increase the number of trams and drivers required just to maintain current service headways.

Keeping the current number of vehicles and drivers would inevitably lead to reduced frequency of service due to the longer journey time caused by the Lonsdale Street deviation.

The PTUA concludes that on both passenger convenience and cost-effectiveness grounds, the Bourke Street Mall tram diversion proposal should be abandoned. We consider that the current pedestrian and transport arrangements in Bourke Street Mall serve tram travellers, shoppers and retailers well and do not need to be changed. The mall's 'tired' look is mainly due to the lack of renovations to the David Jones and Myer department stores. It is these matters that need to be addressed, not non-issues such as seeking to remove trams from the mall.

Labor MP backs public transport

Labor MLC for Melbourne Glenyss Romanes has published a report of a study tour to Canada and the USA. She visited Toronto, Vancouver, Ottawa and Portland, and discovered that (our words, not hers) the position espoused by the PTUA is "mainstream" and policies like those of the current Victorian government are completely discredited. The consensus in all cities is that freeway building needs to be curtailed or stopped altogether and priority given to public transport. The report, 'Public Transport: Our Future's Riding On It', is available from Glenyss Romanes' electoral office (phone 9329 8377).

Copy deadline for the next PTUA news is 15th September

Newsletter production: Daniel Bowen, Peter Parker. Printed on recycled paper by Flash Print, Collingwood.
Our thanks to the dedicated mailout team.

Skybus opposes airport rail link

Skybus has urged the State Government to consider a bus link as an alternative to the proposed heavy rail link to Melbourne Airport.

Skybus, which operates the existing airport-city bus service, said that the state government's review appears to focus exclusively on the establishment of a rail service.

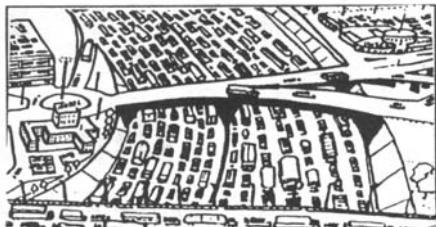
The bus operator said that airport rail links in Sydney and Brisbane had not achieved expected patronage, and an enhanced bus service could provide greater benefits than a rail link for a fraction of the cost.

Skybus services operate every 15, 30 or 60 minutes, depending on the time of day. It operates outside the multimodal Met fare system, but receives no direct public subsidy. The company claims a market share of about three percent of all Melbourne airport passengers.

Skybus stops near Spencer Street Station, allowing convenient access to the suburban rail network and city accommodation.

However, the CBD focus of the service means that it offers little to residents of Melbourne's northern and western suburbs, who must travel into the city and out again to reach the airport via Skybus.

In contrast, a minor extension of the conventional suburban rail system to include Melbourne Airport would improve access from all parts of Melbourne, provided rail lines were linked by frequent and direct cross-radial feeder buses.



First Anniversary of the Bus Tour

But still no improvements for Geelong's buses from the Bracks Government

On this Sunday 22 July, it will be one year since the Geelong Branch of the Public Transport Users Association (PTUA) took the three government MP's Peter Loney, Ian Trezise and Elaine Carbines for a tour of Geelong's bus system, spokesman Tim Petersen said yesterday. "However, despite their acknowledgment of the unacceptable shortfalls of the system, we yet to see any service improvements from the Bracks Government."

The bus tour was reported in the Geelong Advertiser "Geelong's bus timetable fails the test," 24/6/00, p. 1, and in the Geelong News, "MPs on the buses" 25/6/00, p. 7.

While experiencing difficulties obtaining a timetable at the Geelong Railway Station, MP's missed one bus to Highton and were forced to wait over an hour for the next one, despite being in Geelong's city centre at midday on a busy Saturday.

They ended up walking back to their cars without ever having caught a bus.

At that time, the PTUA called for a major improvement in service frequency to every 15 minutes for urban Geelong buses, bus connections to trains, a review of bus routes and more buses in the evening and on weekends.

"Unfortunately, we've seen nothing but inaction from the Bracks Government. It even presided over the removal of GTS logos from Benders buses and the scrapping of the integrated GTS timetable booklet," Mr. Petersen said. "While it appears an integrated timetable booklet may be finally reintroduced, it is likely to cost bus travellers over one dollar instead of the previous twenty cents."

"However, the crucial issues remain the improvement of service frequency and hours of operation. This would allow easier connections to trains, the streamlining of bus routes and of course, much more convenient and attractive service for all Geelong residents and visitors."

"While planning for a half-billion dollar ring freeway around Geelong has begun in earnest, Geelong's fundamental transport problems remain unaddressed. The Bracks Government is long overdue in getting serious about public transport in Geelong."

Enquiries:

Tim Petersen, Convenor of the Geelong Branch of the PTUA, ph. 0428 220 082.

PTUA endorses EV rural transport paper

Last issue we provided a summary of our 'Connecting Victoria' paper, which proposed a Swiss-style public transport network for rural Victoria. We thank those who requested copies or made comments on our paper.

Since that time Environment Victoria has released its own rural transport

policy paper. This is an excellent document that the PTUA has decided to endorse. If you would like to obtain a copy of the EV paper, you can do so by contacting Environment Victoria on 9348 9044 (business hours) or emailing envict@netspace.net.au

Mr Pearce said the Aston by-election had been a "long and fascinating" campaign and he was looking forward to getting on with the job of representing his constituents. He would work for improved public transport and for the Scoresby Freeway as well as ensuring good economic management was maintained, Mr Pearce said. He said through the by-election the people of Aston had showed they cared about their local area. "It's the local issues that make a difference to their lives," he said. Mr Pearce said he was keen to set up an Aston Small Business Forum and

Poll issue is public transport – mayor

by BEN HOPKINSON

ASTON independent candidate and Knox Mayor Garry Scates has withdrawn his support for the Scoresby Freeway.

Cr Scates said he could not support the freeway if the Federal Government did not fund public transport.

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Knox Leader

Formerly the Knox News

Inquiries 9762 2511 Classifieds 9875 8000

TUESDAY,

Polities challenged on city public transport

KYLIE OLIVER

IT had been a year since three local politicians of Geelong had changed. — Elaine MPs Peter Loney and nothing has claimed. — Ian Trezise and their cars of the last July, to their test of

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Transport drive

by BEN HOPKINSON

PUBLIC transport is shaping as a huge issue in the Aston by-election.

The Public Transport Users Association is leading an alliance of public transport and environmental groups in a campaign called Public Transport First, in a bid to make the by-election a referendum on the issue.

PTUA president Paul Mees said the by-

election was the "last chance to make the

politicians listen".

The alliance will letter-drop every house in the electorate and intends to hold a public meeting in Rowville early next month.

"It's time the politicians sat up and noticed that the people of Aston have waited too long

People for Public Transport and the Environment and the Eastern Suburbs Transport and Environment Coalition.

And Scoresby Public Transport Student Alliance, a group of five tertiary student unions representing more than 100,000 students, is forming a similar campaign.

Turning public transport into a by-election issue has garnered support from a frustrated

Knox Council, with mayor Garry Scates last week sending a clear message to political parties about public transport and the Scoresby

Freeway: "if you want to win, do something".

He said the council was also disappointed with the Federal Government's refusal to pay for public transport.

"Even if they haven't done it before, why not now?", he said.

More Aston stories on Pages 8, 9

Aston BY-ELECTION

for funding commitments to vital public transport upgrades," Dr Mees said.

The public transport alliance will call on all candidates to commit to network upgrades ahead of the Scoresby Freeway.

Joining the PTUA in the alliance is the Knox

Environment Society, Environment Victoria, Monash University Student Association, Australasian Railway Association, Young

The council has written to Mr Batchelor and will write to Federal Transport Minister John Anderson.

"They seem to be moving and we don't know which way they are moving," Cr Scates said. "No one has taken seriously the public transport component of the freeway."

Cr Scates said that at the recent community Cabinet meeting he told the ministers: "If the staging is what we believe it is – ending at Burwood Highway – you will have 147,000 people screaming."

He said the council was also disappointed with the Federal Government's refusal to pay for public transport.

"Even if they haven't done it before, why not now?", he said.

2001-02

Fair Fares?

The PTUA has had a firm ticketing policy for a number of years now. We oppose the full automation of the system and have done so since the first real attempts were made in the early 90s.

The experience of the 'One-link' system has not changed our views at all. We believe there should be staff on stations, conductors on trams, and ticket machines should be used as a supplementary system to sell the most common tickets.

Deciding what is the best fare system for Melbourne has not been so easy. We have always strongly supported a system that maximises the ease of transfer between different modes. Exactly what that system should be is open for debate.

That is why the PTUA is organising a policy review. We are encouraging all members to put forward their ideas on the best fare system for Melbourne. Right now, we are calling for written submissions, however brief, on the fares issue. A summary of these submissions will be printed in the next newsletter, and a members meeting held to decide the issue.

Some of the issues you may wish to consider are: should there be more or fewer zones than there are now? Where should the boundaries be? How can commuter trips from places like Bacchus Marsh, Gisborne and Kilmore be integrated into the system? What about longer distance V/Line journeys? What discounts should there be for off-peak travel?

The question of fares is one that is guaranteed to make any regular commuter's blood boil. This is your chance to let of some steam!

Please have your submissions into the PTUA office by 30th September 2001.

The flaws of Charters and Committees

When the Kennett Government privatised Victoria's public transport services it attempted to sugar the pill by introducing a "Passengers Charter" with various guarantees for public transport users in response to pressure from well-intentioned community groups. Part of this Charter included the establishment of a Public Transport Customer Charter Committee (PTCCC) to assist the Director of Public Transport and the Minister in supervising the privatised operators.

The PTUA initially decided not to participate but agreed to reconsider in response to an invitation, and certain assurances, from the then newly elected Transport Minister Peter Batchelor. PTUA Secretary Vaughan Williams has served on the PTCCC since its establishment in May 2000.

The PTCCC was established later than it should have been because of the unexpected change of government shortly after the privatisation was completed in August 1999. However, charters (which had been prepared by the operators without consulting anybody) were presented at the first meeting and the Minister and the operators both gave commitments to review the charters based on PTCCC input within 6 months. Almost 18 months later, the charter review process has not been completed and the operators and department have shown so little commitment to the process that the PTUA felt obliged to withdraw from the sub-committee working on this review.

Since the establishment of the PTCCC, charged with supervising compliance by the operators with their franchise agreements and the passenger's charter, the operators have unilaterally introduced timetable changes supposed to be considered by the PTCCC with monotonous regularity. The most recent example is a service cut to Eltham and Hurstbridge introduced by Connex

without having been disclosed to the PTCCC.

Over the same period, fares have increased sharply (by more than the rate of inflation), there is no genuine progress on dealing with issues of concern to the Committee and commitments made by the Minister and operators, and the integration of the system has deteriorated with individual operators marketing their fragment of the system under separate brands and introducing their own single-mode tickets to sabotage the multimodal ticketing system. Operators have also begun to more explicitly compete with each other, Yarra Trams' "park and ride" initiative being the best example.

The PTUA has become increasingly concerned with this dysfunctional process and is, together with other organisations represented on the PTCCC, currently seeking discussions with the Minister's Office. Unless some marked improvement is forthcoming, the PTUA will have no alternative but to seriously reconsider whether we will lend credibility to the process by participating.

The tough government regulation and private sector innovation touted by supporters of privatised public transport have spectacularly failed to materialize, just as in other examples of privatisation of public transport such as in Britain. Part of this problem is inherent to privatisation, but processes such as the PTCCC can, if successful, mitigate against the problem.

The blame for the failure of the PTCCC process and the collapse of the Passenger's Charter must fall squarely on the Director of Public Transport, John Taylor. Mr Taylor is meant to be supervising the operators and ensuring that the Victorian taxpayer gets value for money - after all, hundreds of millions of dollars are paid to the operators in return for certain levels of service. So far, he has spectacularly failed to do so. If he is unable or unwilling to regulate the operators properly then he must resign or be sacked in favour of somebody who can.

Environment Assessment Review

The Victorian government is reviewing procedures for environmental assessment, following the damning criticisms of the fraudulent Scoresby Freeway EES by the chair of the panel that inquired into the EES (see our March issue). The PTUA met with the review team and proposed the following reforms:

- the proponent (for roads, VicRoads) should not be in charge of preparing the EES. This is asking too much of human nature.
- the proponent should pay, but an independent agency should prepare the EES
- rather than having legalistic panel hearings, the independent agency should involve the community in every stage of the EES through a democratic planning process modelled on that employed in Vancouver for the 'Livable region' strategy.

A discussion paper is due to be published soon. Members who want more information about the review should consult its internet site: www.doi.vic.gov.au/ees

A Very Public Solution: still on sale

PTUA President Paul Mees' book 'A Very Public Solution: Transport in the Dispersed City' is receiving kind reviews in various places.

Professor Peter Hall (who some PTUA members may have heard speak here in March), writing in the latest issue of the UK 'Town and Country Planning' journal says "quite simply, A Very Public

Solution needs to be read by everyone who is bothered about cars and cities.

The PTUA office has received a number of inquiries about how to get hold of the book.

It is still on sale, and can be found at the Technical Bookshop in Swanston Street, the International Bookshop at Trades Hall and the Melbourne University Bookroom.

Or call the publishers, Melbourne University Press, on 9347 3455 to order one.

Andy Ingham 1954 - 2001

We were shocked to hear in July that Cr. Andy Ingham of Moreland had been diagnosed with cancer. Andy died on 22nd July after a short illness, and a packed memorial meeting was held at Brunswick Town Hall on the 27th.

Moreland has probably done more than any other Melbourne council to promote the cause of sustainable transport and Andy was central to that record. He was a great friend of the PTUA as well, and I remain especially grateful for his support last year during Peter Batchelor's smear campaign against me.

Andy's hard work, integrity and 'no-nonsense' approach to civic activism will be long remembered.

-- Paul Mees.

Batchelor bypasses on study reference group

The Royal Park Protection Group has deftly resolved the impasse created by Transport Minister Peter Batchelor's childish attempt to ban the PTUA from the Reference Group for the Northern Central City Corridor transport

study, by appointing PTUA President Paul Mees as the group's representative. The RPPG is to be congratulated on its generosity and maturity. Now for the real challenge: to ensure that the reference Group actually directs the study, rather than being a tokenistic bystander to a study carried out by bureaucrats and consultants!

New members

A warm welcome is extended to those who have recently joined the Association. New members include:

MJJ Angelico
Nicolas Bishop
Martin Bonwick
Boroondara City Council
M Critchlow
J Davidson
PM Fowler
Stella Glorie
Lene Jakobsen
John Laughlin
Lyn MacDonald
Tom MacKie
Bill O'Connor
Betty Oke
John Shortridge
Helen Smith
Heather M Tobias
Julian Tuckett
Robert Wagner
Ian Watterson
Anthony Young

PTUA membership is a low-cost way that people can assist in bringing about the high-quality public transport that Victoria needs. If you would like us to send a brochure to a prospective member, please contact us.

City Link

Peter Allan's High Court appeal for standing to challenge the City Link tax breaks was heard in Canberra on 23rd May. As expected, the Court reserved its decision. A result is expected towards the end of the year

