

State budget unbalanced for transport

Though it contains several worthwhile measures, public transport continues to play second fiddle to cars in this year's Victorian State Budget.

The budget includes funding for suburban train extensions to Roxburgh Park and Craigieburn and commencement of work on the Knox City tram extension. Funding is also to be provided for a 'shadow bus' from Vermont South to Knox City to run until the tram extension is completed. The PTUA strongly supports these initiatives.

The budget was most disappointing in its largesse for urban freeways. Despite the government claiming to financially responsible, it has committed almost \$500 million to the unnecessary and destructive Scoresby Freeway. This single project costs much more than all the public transport initiatives put together.

The Budget's unbalanced emphasis is a recipe for maintaining the status quo and entrenching car dependency. Public transport will need more than just crumbs if we are to achieve the higher modal share for public transport that Melbourne needs, and that the government has committed to in its 20% by 2020 strategy.

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PTUA applauds National Transport Plan

The PTUA is optimistic that the Federal Government's new AusLink national transport plan would help create a more efficient, environmentally friendly and socially just transport system for Australia.

The AusLink strategy was announced last month by Federal Transport Minister John Anderson. Funding will be allocated to projects according to their merit, rather than almost entirely on roads as at present. The role of rail and other modes will be acknowledged through a multimodal infrastructure development plan, with special provision for regional projects.

This is a victory for common sense in transport funding. Currently both public transport and rural roads are being starved of funds because all the Federal money is going to urban road projects of dubious merit, such as the \$1 billion Scoresby Freeway. Under this plan, we could see Federal funding going to those places where it is most needed: rural rail and roads, and rail links in outer-suburban areas like Rowville that currently have no decent public transport.

The PTUA suggest that the Federal Government apply the new criteria not only to future projects, but also to present projects not yet started. Roads like the Scoresby and Merri Creek Freeways are soaking up funding that is urgently needed for public transport and rural roads. There are less expensive alternatives that are likely to be more effective than new freeways, but have never been fairly evaluated. Here is an opportunity for a fiscally responsible government to curb this blatant waste of public money.

***Fares and ticketing:
Meeting to determine PTUA policy.
See page 5.***

Keeping in touch...

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The PTUA members' discussion list is at
www.yahoogroups.com/group/ptua

Stay up to date with PTUA news via the PTUA Announcements mailing list
www.yahoogroups.com/group/ptua-news

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Committee Meetings

Third Thursday of each month. Members are welcome to attend. Please call the office for details

From the Secretary...

Help wanted

The PTUA is currently looking for more volunteers to undertake a range of administrative and campaign tasks. We are understaffed at present and desperately need more help. The PTUA Office is the front line of our campaigns and coordinates the servicing and recruitment of members.

We also need members to monitor their local papers and send transport-related stories into the office. We have previously had office staff monitor these at the state library but this is labour-intensive work and so we have decided to ask for members to do this instead. There is no need to contact us - please just monitor your local paper and post articles into the office.

For office staff, the following skills are desirable (but not essential):

- Good oral and written communication skills
- Good computer skills
- A high level of initiative and capacity to follow through
- Excellent organisational skills

Office volunteers have a wide scope to perform tasks they are interested in and can be a good way to become familiar with the organisation prior to joining the Committee or getting

involved in a Campaign Team. We provide references to assist volunteers with obtaining paid employment.

The PTUA has limited management capacity, so please follow us up if we don't get back to you on your offer of assistance. We can sometimes end up in a vicious cycle of not having the resources to follow up offers of voluntary assistance and your persistence and initiative is appreciated.

Thank you

The PTUA functions with limited resources. For a community organisation of its type, it is very large and effective. Nevertheless, we operate almost entirely on membership subscriptions and do not receive any significant government or industry funding. Most members of the Committee work full time, and have limited time to devote to the PTUA.

We would like to thank, on your behalf, the individuals and organisations that provide the practical, moral and financial support to keep the PTUA operating.

PTUA office bearers and committee members, office volunteers, media spokespersons, campaign team leaders and helpers, those who prepare, edit and mail out the newsletter, those who maintain and host the website, all provide their services voluntarily. Please remember this when you ask them for assistance. The PTUA could not operate effectively without this voluntary support - you know who you are, thanks for your contribution.

- Vaughan Williams, Secretary

Copy deadline for the next PTUA news is 15th August

Newsletter production: Daniel Bowen, Peter Parker and Vaughan Williams. Printed on recycled paper by Flash Print, Collingwood.
Our thanks to Max Nicholson and the rest of the dedicated mail out team.

Inspectors and ticketing

Rights Blitz gearing up

As this edition of PTUA News goes to press, the PTUA is finalising preparation for a joint project with the Consumer Law Centre Victoria distributing leaflets informing passengers of their rights when dealing with ticket inspectors. If you can help and have not already volunteered, please contact us on 9650 7898 or office@ptua.org.au.

The PTUA and CLCV together with other public interest organisations have become increasingly concerned at systematic abuse and exceeding of powers by ticket inspectors as part of the aggressive fare enforcement strategy being pursued by the private operators.

The Rights brochure will be placed on the PTUA website at www.ptua.org.au in the near future.

Ticket Inspectors getting more power

Liberals sell out public interest

On 8 May, Transport Minister Peter Batchelor introduced a Bill into State parliament that empowers inspectors to require passengers to produce identification or risk arrest and detention. Apart from the obvious disproportionality of arresting passengers who (for whatever reason) have the wrong ticket or no ticket at all, this provision amounts to a requirement for the travelling public to carry identification. This Bill has drawn justifiable criticism from Liberty Victoria and other organisations including the PTUA and CLCV. These organisations made representations to the Minister as well as to the Opposition and Independent MPs.

The PTUA was informed by the Shadow Minister for Transport, Geoff Leigh, that the Liberal Opposition would not block the Bill. Mr Leigh offered the excuse that the offending provision had been tacked on to a number of worthwhile reforms in the taxi and motorcycle areas. The PTUA believes that this is not an excuse for Parliament to fail to protect the public interest. It is the Government's job to avoid mixing unacceptable provisions with worthwhile ones, and the blame for the delayed Bill would rest squarely with the Government. The PTUA is extremely disappointed with Mr Leigh's hypocrisy. The Opposition has criticised the provision but ultimately voted for it - their actions do not back up their words.

PTUA Meets Operators

Senior PTUA representatives Les Chandra and Vaughan Williams met with representatives of the private operators at their request on 6 May for a productive, if full and frank, exchange of views on the issues of ticketing and fare evasion. The operators appear determined to pursue a strategy of aggressive enforcement combined with appeals to passengers (through advertising) to do the right thing by the system.

The PTUA does not advocate that any passenger should break the law. However, we are of the view that many passengers are not attempting to evade fares but are being frustrated in their attempts to purchase tickets by the notoriously unreliable ticketing system. It is also true that there is an informal campaign of civil disobedience being waged by some passengers, and it is our view that this campaign would be defused by the government and operators being seen to do the right thing by the travelling public.

Towards a solution

In the short term, the Government and operators should immediately move to use the 200 publicly funded staff for their intended purpose as genuine conductors and station staff.

The PTUA would support the Government in conducting a strategic, consultative review of the ticketing system. It is our view that such a review need not re-invent the wheel, as the recommendations of the 1991 Met Ticketing Taskforce remain the best solution to the vexed ticketing problem. Such a review should include appropriate consumer representation from the PTUA and other organisations and be conducted with the needs of the travelling public in mind.

The PTUA also supports the establishment of a Public Transport Ombudsman as has been done for virtually every other privatised essential service. Such an Ombudsman would provide a clear point of contact for dissatisfied passengers, accountability for ticket inspectors, and an independent agency to provide feedback on systemic issues.

The PTUA's role in all of this

The PTUA Committee has for some time held the view that our work on the vexed issues of ticketing and fare evasion was best deployed at a broad policy level including lobbying and media campaigning. We have taken the approach of referring members (or non-members) calling the office to their local MP rather than attempting to pursue complaints on

their behalf. There are three main reasons for this:

- In our experience, representations by MPs offer the best chance of getting an inappropriate infringement notice withdrawn (short of contesting the matter in court).
- PTUA office staff are not qualified to give legal advice. For legal advice, contact the Consumer Law Centre on 9629 6300.
- The PTUA office is staffed entirely by volunteers. We simply do not have the resources to follow up the volume of very justified complaints the ticketing and fare enforcement systems continue to generate.

For these reasons, we suggest members pursue complaints through their local MP. If possible, go to see the MP rather than just write or telephone. Every Victorian has three members of state parliament who are paid to listen to their constituents' concerns and assist with problems they experience with government.

In Brief...

Trams not taxis

Transport Minister Peter Batchelor recently announced a number of new taxi licences limited to late night operation, citing a shortage of taxis at night. Unfortunately, the link between shortages of taxis and demand for public transport seems to be lost on the Minister.

The PTUA believes that demand for taxis could be alleviated by running trains after midnight on Friday and Saturday nights until 3am, and introducing a skeletal tram network linking the major inner-city entertainment precincts. The Nightrider buses should also be extended both to more suburbs and more nights of the week.

Skybus upgrade

Skybus and the government have announced an upgrade to the Skybus airport service. This will include better traffic signal priority and new buses, and together with recent changes to the frequency (every 15 minutes most of the day) means a vast improvement in the airport bus service.

We believe consideration should be given to fully integrating the service into the Met fare structure. More than new buses, this would be likely to boost patronage of this service, and help it truly compete with the car.

Forums call for better public transport

Improved public transport has emerged as a key issue in public meetings held to discuss Melbourne's future growth.

The forums were held across Victoria as part of the second round of consultations for Melbourne's Metropolitan Strategy. The strong interest in transport continued the pattern set by the first round of forums that was also dominated by transport topics.

Collation of results from the forums showed that:

- 'Transport and Accessibility' was the most popular single discussion topic chosen by Melbourne participants and second most popular outside Melbourne.
- Participants in the 'Transport and Accessibility' discussion were supportive of initiatives aimed at reducing car use and improving the usage and service levels of public transport.
- Only a minority of participants supported a need for more roads and freeways.
- Participants disagreed with all methods offered for funding public transport improvements. However the disagreement was least with reduced road funding and the use of road and parking charges than the other options offered.
- Much discussion in other topics eg 'The Natural Environment' and 'Neighbourhoods and Communities' also supported greater emphasis on walking, cycling and public transport.

The forums indicate that there is widespread public support for policies similar to those advocated by the PTUA.

It is now time for the State Government to fall behind what the public is saying, end current car-dominated transport planning and funding patterns and shift the emphasis towards public transport.

Geelong report

Following the last Geelong Report, the Geelong Branch met with bureaucrats from the Rail Projects Group. The meeting came just after the joint announcement that the Geelong line would not be electrified, and that Grovedale Station would not be built.

The PTUA supported electrification, largely on the grounds that electric trains would be able to make more stops at stations in Geelong's urban area, and at Werribee and Footscray, and still meet the government's self-imposed 45-minute travel time target. However, the State Government rejected electrification on the grounds that an extension of the existing Werribee service would add up to 12 minutes to travel times. Trains to Geelong stopping all stations via Altona were probably not what most Geelong travellers had in mind!

Of more concern, the proposed Grovedale Station on the southern edge of Geelong's urban area, was rejected on the grounds that it was not feasible. Yet strangely enough, the feasibility study conducted by National Express for the State Government concludes that it is feasible! It seems that while local MP's jump on the bandwagon to promote a half-billion dollar ring freeway - largely to 'deal' with holiday traffic and promote development on the Surf Coast - \$7 million or less for a station serving the same area is unthinkable.

At the meeting, the Branch was also informed that the Fast Rail Project would only be looking at upgrading the track between Geelong and Werribee (apart from minor signalling upgrades.) This would allow the 160 km/h trains to make it between Geelong Station and Spencer Street in 45 minutes, stopping at only North Geelong and North Melbourne in between. At this stage, only 29 of the new fast trains will be built, and shared around the entire Victorian country network at V/Line's discretion.

The project brief is so narrow that it will not be dealing with service frequency, bus connections or any other issues, which will all be left to the initiative of other government departments and the benevolence of National Express, the operator of V/Line. It would seem that the fast rail projects are at risk of ending up as just an expensive exercise in track work (and the publication of glossy brochures!)

In conjunction with Cycling Geelong, the Geelong Branch is continuing to promote its proposal for a Geelong Region Alternative and Sustainable Transport Strategy, which would incorporate action plans for walking, cycling and public transport. While it has met resistance from the City of Greater Geelong, which is keen

for the road-focussed Geelong Transport Strategy to be approved, it has been able to secure regular bi-monthly meetings with the Mayor.

PTCCC

Members will recall that the PTUA has had some difficulties with the operation of the Public Transport Customer Charter Committee, the main forum set up to advise the Minister on public transport. PTUA Secretary Vaughan Williams sits on the PTCCC along with representatives of Environment Victoria, the Consumer Law Centre, and the Victorian Council of Social Services. Several members of the public also sit on the Committee.

One of the more worthwhile outcomes of our participation has been securing the Committee's agreement to recommend to the Minister that bus route 630 (the main route serving Monash University) have its frequency improved to 15 minutes. If implemented, this will provide predictable and reliable connections with trains at Huntingdale Station.

We are hopeful that this matter will be followed up promptly. The PTUA has found that previous matters raised by the PTCCC have gone unheeded by the Department, with a failure to attend to matters between quarterly meetings. This means that over six months can elapse before action is taken. This is despite Minister Batchelor describing the PTCCC as his "key advisory body on public transport".

One area in which there has been progress is in the establishment of working groups within the PTCCC. Unfortunately the working groups and PTCCC are prevented by the DoI bureaucracy from dealing with fundamental issues like service frequencies and hours of operation. This makes their value rather limited.

Nevertheless the PTUA will remain involved in the PTCCC process, in a spirit of 'critical collaboration' along with other groups. However we will continue to campaign on core issues that the DOI does not like the PTCCC to discuss, but which are important to public transport users. Accordingly we will not treat the PTCCC process as a substitute for our other lobbying and media activities, which will continue.

We will keep members informed of any progress.

Outer East Campaign Revs Up For 2002

Since 1996 a strong campaign focus for the PTUA has been getting political support for a package of public transport improvements in Melbourne's outer eastern suburbs, as an alternative to the \$1 billion Scoresby Freeway.

The recent State Budget announced \$445 million for the Scoresby Freeway, along with a mere \$50 million for public transport improvements, centring on a two-kilometre extension of the East Burwood tram to Vermont South. The PTUA, along with groups such as the Knox Environment Society and the Monash Students Association, has advocated a tram extension to Knox City, a train extension to Rowville from Huntingdale or Glen Waverley, and an overhaul of bus services in the region, at a total cost one-third that of the freeway.

The State Budget delivers about 5 per cent of what is needed for public transport in this vast, poorly served area of Melbourne - despite the Bracks Government having promised in 1999 to identify a route for the train line, build the full tram extension and develop a comprehensive transport plan for the Outer East.

While the freeway may seem like a fait accompli, contracts for construction are not expected to be let until at least the end of this year. Meanwhile, a State election is due early in 2003. This is shaping up as the final 'make-or-break' opportunity for our six-year campaign: if the money disappears into the freeway now, there will be none left to fund any major public transport improvements in the eastern suburbs for many years to come.

Both the Scoresby Freeway and the Merri Creek Freeway in Melbourne's north are being challenged in separate court actions mounted by Friends of Merri Creek and by former PTUA President Paul Mees. Paul's action seeks to prove that VicRoads has failed to disclose its intention to complete the Eastern Ring Road through Bulleen, as required under Federal environmental legislation, and he has been granted 'discovery' or access to any internal VicRoads documents that might prove this.

The Friends of Merri Creek action seeks to have the Hume Freeway stopped on the grounds that it threatens National Estate grasslands, and the government is therefore required to demonstrate that there is no alternative to the freeway. An alternative based on public transport and upgrades to existing roads was proposed in

a report by Bill Russell, but has not been evaluated as required under National Estate legislation.

The importance of these court actions is not that they might stop the freeways dead in their tracks if they succeed (this is unlikely) but that they may, in conjunction with a grassroots political campaign, impress on politicians the need for a proper process to evaluate freeways and public transport as alternatives according to transparent criteria.

As a member of the Public Transport First coalition, the PTUA last year intervened in elections in the Federal seats of Aston and La Trobe. These campaigns met with mixed success due to the many conflicting issues affecting voters in these elections. Through them we learned many valuable lessons that will be carried forward into the State election.

Several meetings have taken place this year involving members of the PTUA, Monash Students Association, Knox Environment Society, Eastern Corridor Transport Coalition, Save The Green Wedges Coalition and Melbourne University Student Union. Among the campaign strategies being explored is the idea of a Public Transport First political party, able to field its own candidates in the State election, direct preferences, and be identified on ballot papers.

Although many PTUA members support political parties in a personal capacity, as an independent, non-partisan organisation the PTUA will not provide endorsement or financial support for a Public Transport First party. However, we will watch developments with interest and look forward to reviewing Public Transport First's policies as they are released.

Fares and zones: What's our policy?

For the past ten years the PTUA has campaigned strongly on its ticketing policy: that ticket machines not be used as a substitute for staff, that conductors and station staff are needed to sell tickets as well as to ensure passenger service and security, and that use of periodical tickets should be encouraged to reduce the overhead of ticket sales.

However, quite separate from the question of how tickets should be sold is the issue of how the fares should be determined. While our three-zone system of fares is not nearly as dysfunctional as the ticketing system, it has a number of anomalies. For example, a traveller from Monash University must currently pay more to

travel 10km to Knoxfield than to travel 35km to Laverton, as the former requires a Zone 2/3 ticket while the latter requires only a Zone 1 ticket. The arbitrariness of zone boundaries means that while on the Frankston line Zone 2 extends all the way to Carrum (34km from the city), on the Ringwood line it only extends 23km to Heatherdale. Many important district centres such as Caulfield, Camberwell, Box Hill and Ringwood are located just beyond the overlap between two zones, making public transport unattractive for travellers from the next zone.

The PTUA currently has no clear view on how the fare system could be improved to eliminate the worst of these anomalies, aside from our 'bottom line' position that the system must remain multimodal and discounted periodical tickets must remain available. The main options appear to be:

1. Retain the present system but fine-tune the zone boundaries to remove the most glaring anomalies.
2. Redesign the boundaries to approximate concentric circles around the GPO, and increase the number of zones to four to reduce the fare hike from one zone to the next. (This has been PTUA policy in the past.) Reduce the size of Zone 1 relative to other zones, thereby eliminating the need for the confusing Short Trip and Rail Plus Two tickets.
3. Go to a flat-fare system for the entire metropolitan area.

The following specific options could also be considered:

- Divide present-day Zone 1 into an 'inner city' zone (slightly larger than the old City Saver Area) and the remainder, each charged at roughly half the existing Zone 1 fare.
- Divide each existing zone into two, and have the minimum fare cover two of these new zones, with one-zone fare increments. Zone overlaps could then be eliminated, simplifying the system, while not unfairly penalising short trips that happen to cross a zone boundary.
- Extend the Met zone system to include Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and Gippsland as additional separate zones.

A PTUA members' meeting has been organised to consider these and other ideas, and help formulate a PTUA fares policy. Come along and have your say, and feel free to contribute your own ideas.

Date: Wednesday 3 July, 6:30pm for 7pm
Place: Ground Floor Meeting Room, Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane

Contracts vs. Reality: M>Tram

This issue, we've looked at M>Tram (formerly Swanston Trams) actual peak services compared to those they are obligated by their contract to run. A summary of the findings is presented here. You can find the full details on our web site at www.ptua.org.au

Overall there are few breaches to their contract. The main ones, on routes 16 and 69, are due to the withdrawal of W class trams because of continued mishandling of brake problems, and the consequent shortage of trams. The other breaches are on routes 22 and 72 in the afternoon peak.

Service (measured at)	Direction	Time	Franchise frequency required (mins)	Actual frequency timetabled	Contract met?
1a Sth Mel to University (University)	Peak am to Melb	07:31-09:30	10	8.57	✓
	Peak pm from Melb	15:31-18:30	10	8.57	✓
		18:31-19:30	15	15.00	✓
1b East Coburg to Arts Centre (Arts Centre)	Peak am to Melb	07:31-09:30	8	8.00	✓
	Peak pm from Melb	15:31-18:30	10	9.47	✓
		18:31-19:30	10	10.00	✓
3 East Malvern to University (University)	Peak am to Melb	07:31-09:30	12	10.91	✓
	Peak pm from Melb	15:31-18:30	12	12.00	✓
		18:31-19:30	15	15.00	✓
5 Malvern to University (University)	Peak am to Melb	07:31-09:30	12	10.91	✓
	Peak pm from Melb	15:31-18:30	15	11.25	✓
		18:31-19:30	20	12.00	✓
6 Glen Iris to University (University)	Peak am to Melb	07:31-09:30	12	9.23	✓
	Peak pm from Melb	15:31-18:30	10	9.47	✓
		18:31-19:30	15	15.00	✓
8 Toorak to University (University)	Peak am to Melb	07:31-09:30	8	7.50	✓
	Peak pm from Melb	15:31-18:30	8	7.83	✓
		18:31-19:30	15	12.00	✓
16 St Kilda Beach to University (University)	Peak am to Melb	07:31-09:30	10	12.00	BREACH
	Peak pm from Melb	15:31-18:30	10	15.00	BREACH
		18:31-19:30	15	15.00	✓
19 North Coburg to City (city terminus)	Peak am to Melb	07:31-09:30	6	5.22	✓
	Peak pm from Melb	15:31-18:30	6	5.45	✓
		18:31-19:30	12	8.57	✓
22 Moreland to Arts Centre (Arts Centre)	Peak am to Melb	07:31-09:30	8	6.32	✓
	Peak pm from Melb	15:31-18:30	8	9.00	BREACH
		18:31-19:30	10	10.00	✓
55 West Coburg to Domain Inter. (Flinders Street)	Peak am to Melb	07:31-09:30	6	5.00	✓
	Peak pm from Melb	15:31-18:30	6	6.00	✓
		18:31-19:30	15	12.00	✓
57 West Maribynong to City (city terminus)	Peak am to Melb	07:31-09:30	8	7.06	✓
	Peak pm from Melb	15:31-18:30	8	6.92	✓
		18:31-19:30	12	12.00	✓
59 Airport West to City (city terminus)	Peak am to Melb	07:31-09:30	6	5.71	✓
	Peak pm from Melb	15:31-18:30	8	6.43	✓
		18:31-19:30	15	12.00	✓
64 East Brighton to University (University)	Peak am to Melb	07:31-09:30	12	10.91	✓
	Peak pm from Melb	15:31-18:30	12	11.25	✓
		18:31-19:30	20	15.00	✓
67 Carnegie to University (University)	Peak am to Melb	07:31-09:30	10	9.23	✓
	Peak pm from Melb	15:31-18:30	12	12.00	✓
		18:31-19:30	15	15.00	✓
69 St Kilda Beach to Kew (Kew)	Peak am to Kew	07:31-09:30	12	10.00	✓
	Peak pm from Kew	15:31-18:30	10	12.86	BREACH
		18:31-19:30	15	15.00	✓
72 Camberwell to University (University)	Peak am to Melb	07:31-09:30	12	9.00	✓
	Peak pm from Melb	15:31-18:30	10	10.59	BREACH
		18:31-19:30	15	12.00	✓
78 Prahran to North Richmond (North Richmond)	Peak am to Richmond	07:31-09:30	12	9.00	✓
	Peak pm from Richmond	15:31-18:30	12	12.00	✓
79 St Kilda Beach to North Richmond		18:31-19:30	20	20.00	✓
82 Footscray to Moonee Ponds (Moonee Ponds)	Peak am to Moonee Ponds	07:31-09:30	15	11.25	✓
	Peak pm from Moonee Ponds	15:31-18:30	20	16.36	✓
		18:31-19:30	30	20.00	✓

Letters to the Editor

Letters may be sent to the office, or e-mailed to newsletter@ptua.org.au – no attachments please. Note: letters may be edited for reasons of space or clarity.

Tickets, or fines?

My well-organised and law-abiding mother recently pottered down to her local newsagent and bought their last 'sixty plus' ticket. The next customer wanted a two-hour zone 1 concession, but they'd sold out. Despite one's best intentions it's difficult to buy a train ticket when the platform vending machine is out of order, the local shop has no stock, and the next nearest shop is fifteen minutes walk away. Maybe M Train reckons selling tickets is less profitable than fining ticket less travellers?

Philip Crohn, Surrey Hills

It should be noted that it is the government, not the operators, who get the fines. This once again shows, however, that the ticketing system needs an overhaul.

Inspectors draconian

On the evening of May 8, I was sitting next to a young woman (we can call her Susan). She had boarded the tram in the city and fallen asleep. When the ticket inspectors swooped the tram, this young woman was woken up by an inspector. She produced a 10-trip ticket about half used and apologised to the inspector, stating that she forgot to validate it.

What ensued could only be described as an interrogation. Two other inspectors hung around while Susan, who was newly arrived from New Zealand, was treated to a nasty taste of Melbourne.

Susan could produce official NZ name ID but no proof of current address. The inspector told her that she had committed an offence and reasoned without any protest from Susan that if the inspector had not woken her, she would not have validated her ticket. The inspector stated that the 'matter had to be reported'. Android style, the ticket inspector rolled forth with her script. She asked Susan for details including her home telephone number. She asked with whom Susan lived and whether anyone at the house would verify her name and address. When Susan said that she did not know if anyone would be at home, the inspector switched to her supplementary script and changed her tone to one of challenge. [At this point another

passenger commented that the process seemed intrusive and defended Susan, pointing out that she had provided her name with some ID and had also produced a ticket - although not validated. The ticket inspector turned to this passenger and suggested that she make a complaint on a 1800 number and without a flicker refocussed on her quarry.]

Susan was a little upset, but perfectly polite, quietly spoken and entirely cooperative.

When the phone call to Susan's house rang out, the inspector asked who else could verify her identity. Susan explained for the second time that she did not know many people in Melbourne because she had just arrived. The inspector became more insistent, finally stating that if no one could identify her, then Susan would be removed from the tram at the next stop, detained and that the police would be called. Susan started to panic and cry a little. The passenger who had intervened prior spoke to the inspector and asked whether Susan could phone a friend to verify her identity. The inspector, showing her second sign of emotion (exasperation), said "well that's what I asked her". It wasn't quite what had been asked, but nonetheless this passenger, who was a saint for standing up when no-one else dared - calmed Susan and she was allowed to phone a friend. I had reached my stop and it was with some relief that I could leave the tram.

I have not been so close to anything that is so clearly designed to intimidate another person in a public place. The other inspectors watched on for the whole procedure with nearly expressionless faces that betrayed just a hint of Schadenfreude. The inspector who was taking the report was like an empty soul; you couldn't even tell if her job was satisfying her.

Susan clearly should have validated her ticket, and if a fine was warranted, then fair enough. Maybe the inspectors need a couple of scripts - one for angry passengers and one for the people who just give in? There is no excuse for a procedure that reduces a passenger to tears and stuns all the surrounding passengers into fearful silence. It's quite shameful. (and for that matter, so is the behaviour of other passengers, including my own, for not standing up for the weaker person)

The no-mercy, no-emotion approach is an example of poor PR. The job of inspector must be dreadful and the policy and procedure they implement is draconian.

As a consumer who is lucky enough to be able to exercise choice, I [will in future] choose not to give my money or my

custom to an organisation whose value of a person's self esteem is this low. That they would seek to protect or recoup a single unit of revenue at such a cost to passenger comfort tells us a lot more about their values than a poster about running to schedule.

The car may not be the long-term option but the tram is no option at all. I guess I'll just have to be on my bike, then.

Heidi, Brunswick (full name and address supplied)

Membership rate changes

Over the years the PTUA has worked very hard running numerous campaigns to help improve our public transport.

Unfortunately, these campaigns cost the organisation money and it has become increasingly clear that the PTUA needs more money than is currently available in order to continue our work and remain viable in the future.

Consequently, we have made the difficult decision of increasing membership fees and restructuring the membership categories:

- Regular membership now has three classifications; Bronze, Silver and Gold. Bronze (\$25/year) is the equivalent to the old "regular" category, silver (\$50) is equivalent to the old "donor" category. All members have the same voting rights.
- Increases have been kept to a minimum. The PTUA last increased fees to cover GST costs in 2000. We have kept increases to their practical minimum and have tried to ensure that our membership is still affordable compared to similar organisations.
- You can now renew using your credit card.
- We are currently investigating a package of benefits for those who take up the Premium memberships.

The new rates will be implemented from the end of July as memberships expire.

Members can renew at the old rates until then.

- Daniel Borowski, Treasurer

PTUA News

Newsletter of the Public Transport Users' Association, Org. No. A-6256L
Print Post: Publication No. PP 331088/00009
If undeliverable, return to:
PTUA Office, Second Floor, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000

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