



Batchelor gone: High hopes for new minister

Peter Batchelor is no longer the transport minister. A ministerial reshuffle following the re-election of the Bracks government on November 25th has resulted him being moved elsewhere, which has been widely seen as a demotion.

The PTUA called for Batchelor’s replacement in May, following the release of the government’s *Meeting Our Transport Challenges* (MOTC) document, because despite MOTC throwing billions at transport, it proposed very little to get people out of their cars and onto public transport.

The Bracks reshuffle has split the old portfolio into two: Public Transport, and a separate ministry of Roads & Ports. It is ironic that despite the calls for better integration between transport and planning, this important area of governance is now more fractured than it has been since the Kennett years.

The new Minister for Public Transport is Lynne Kosky, who was formerly Minister for Education. She comes to the portfolio with a proven track record of achieving innovation and reform in Education, and we have high hopes that she will do the same in public transport.

The primary challenge ahead for public transport must be that of winning market share. Despite patronage on the system growing in the past few years, so has car travel, and overall share has been stagnant.

Minister Kosky now has a clear mandate to untangle the re-privatised mess her predecessor left behind and put the public interest back into public transport. We wish the Minister all success in the task ahead.

All of Labor’s promises listed ⇒ Page 4



Transport highlighted on the hustings

It is notable that this is the first State election in many years where transport has emerged as a decisive issue in the eyes of the mass media. As a result of strong campaigning throughout the year by the PTUA and its allies, election candidates from all parties were tested on

their public transport credentials and many parties staked their campaigns on promises to improve public transport.

In some seats, Government MPs who spent the campaign telling their constituents they weren’t allowed to have new rail lines were punished with higher-than-average swings and defeat. In the context of an overall Labor victory there is a lesson to be learned from these individual losses, in seats such as Ferntree Gully (whose sitting MP Anne Eckstein was notorious for talking down the Rowville rail extension) and Doncaster (where sitting Upper House member Lidia Argondizzo lost her bid to move to the Lower House after saying no to a future Doncaster train line).

East/South eastern suburbs ⇒ Page 2

South Morang / Geelong ⇒ Page 3

Also in this issue

Weekend train overcrowding	5
Summer timetables loom	5
A new climate for transport	6
Letter to the editor.....	6
Eddington report	7
Fare reform on the way	7

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Our web site is at www.ptua.org.au

The PTUA runs email lists for member discussions, and to stay up to date with PTUA events, and view archived newsletters online:

www.ptua.org.au/members/resources

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Committee Meetings

Meetings are on the third Thursday of each month. Members are welcome to observe. Please call or e-mail the office for details.

East and south eastern suburbs make their voices heard

Residents of Melbourne's eastern suburbs made their voices heard in the November state election with the government losing six outer eastern seats. The tight contests in a number of seats, such as Kilsyth and Ferntree Gully, clearly demonstrated the importance of public transport as an election issue.

The government may have retained such seats had promises, such as the Knox tram, the Rowville rail line and improved services along the Belgrave and Lilydale lines, been honoured and not simply forgotten.

The PTUA was pleased with the discussions held with a number of candidates, and will continue these discussions to ensure that new MPs honour their commitment to public transport issues.

Melbourne's southeast is also finding its voice on public transport issues with regular meetings at Springvale. We plan to formalise a south-eastern branch in 2007, to continue seeking to bring forward commitments to Lyndhurst station and the Cranbourne East rail extension.

The work of branches has directly contributed to the PTUA's successful lobbying efforts in the lead up to the State Election. The momentum however must not stop.

The PTUA is always looking for new active participants. Please contact Alex Makin at alex.makin@ptua.org.au to register your interest.

The key issues of infrequent services, a lack of infrastructure and a convoluted bus network still remain and only continued political pressure will ensure action.

Copy deadline for the next PTUA news is 30th January 2007

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South Morang Rail – a victory of sorts

An active election campaign by the South Morang Rail Alliance and supportive groups saw all the opposition political parties commit to an early extension of the railway to South Morang. Focal point of the SMRA campaign was a major public rally at the site of the South Morang Railway station, complemented by local media interviews and letterbox-drops.

To support the local campaign, the PTUA launched a factsheet on the South Morang rail extension, designed to demonstrate the feasibility and necessity of the rail extension. The factsheet cited the Perth example of \$420m to complete a new 70km rail line

compared to the Victorian government's claims of \$240m to complete the 5km extension from Epping to South Morang along an existing reservation. Failure to fund the rail extension makes a mockery of both Melbourne 2030 and the government's objective of 20% of motorised trips on public transport by 2020 and has thrown into complete upheaval the growth plans of the City of Whittlesea.

Shortly after the rally, Ted Baillieu announced the Liberal Party would, if elected, extend the line in its first term of government, echoing the promise from the then Labor opposition in 1999 of completion by 2003. Coming up to election day,

the Greens, People Power and Democrats all pledged their support for the extension to occur in the next 4 years.

The election outcome was obviously not good for an early commencement of works on the South Morang line but there were swings against the government in the local seats of Mill Park (6%) and Yan Yean (1.6%). However, the line is squarely in the Upper House region where Greg Barber (The Greens) was elected, with a platform commitment supporting the extension and improving public transport.

Geelong branch report

The Geelong Branch was active during the election period. Although no Geelong seats were officially marginal, South Barwon had always been a Liberal seat before the 2002 election, and the Labor member was considered vulnerable. In the end he was fairly comfortably returned.

We put out press releases condemning the fact that almost all buses stop running before sundown in summer. We also launched, with accompanying map, a campaign to introduce three direct "tram-like" trunk routes on the bus system.

Unfortunately the Liberals put up no coherent public transport strategy to counter Labor so the Branch scored both parties as a bare D in our election scorecard. The Geelong Greens asked for our input into their policies, and this was reflected in the comprehensive

commitments they made. In the Geelong electorate the Greens candidate achieved a noticeable swing towards him, likely as a result of strong transport policy.

We put out a media release blaming the Liberals failure to win South Barwon partly on their failure to make a clear case for change on public transport policy in the region.

We've sent congratulations and notice of a meeting for all successful candidates in the Geelong region. We want to push better for service frequencies, route restructures and more comprehensive timetable information, and the creation of a local Geelong public transport authority.

There is still no word from the DOI on the Public Transport Action Plan

for the Geelong region, arising from the Transport Strategy prepared for G21. It is now a year since the consultants delivered their report. The last month has seen the cancellation of two meetings at which the Plan was to be presented, most recently so that the new Minister can be briefed on the issue.

In particular this delay means that last year's "temporary" dispersal of bus stops around central Geelong, due to major road works, will persist well into the New Year.

A new timetable booklet for Geelong urban buses was recently published, in a new format, with the Viclink logo on the cover. However the local DOI officer won't tell us how Viclink was involved or what the future implications are.

What Labor promised

For your reference, here is a list of Labor's promises for public transport for the next four years – both good and bad.

This list includes the first four years of MOTC plans.

Public transport management

Establishment of a Co-ordinator General of Infrastructure

Buy-back regional rail network from Pacific National

Metropolitan buses

Work commencing on Red, Green, Yellow orbital Smartbus routes

Upgrades of 250 local bus routes to seven-day-a-week (mostly hourly) services to 9pm

Commencement of Doncaster bus upgrade

Review of bus routes

DDA upgrades

Metropolitan trains

Major timetable revision in 2007

Metrol and communications upgrade

DDA upgrades

Station carpark expansion

Metropolitan rail network

Commence construction of third track Caulfield to Springvale

City loop signalling upgrade

West Footscray to Sunshine third track

Sunshine to Watergardens signalling upgrade

North Melbourne station upgrade

Clifton Hill to Westgarth duplication

Laverton to Werribee signalling upgrade

Upgrade Hurstbridge signalling Good

Build Coolaroo station

Metropolitan trams

Think Tram programme to continue, including St Kilda Road upgrade

Disability Discrimination Act upgrades

Fares and ticketing

(Fare changes are expected to take place in March 2007.)

Myki smartcard system to rollout from 2007

Abolish zone 3

Expand Met zones to cover city fringe areas

Cut V/Line fares by 20%

Make Metcards valid on Nightrider

Staffing and security

Some additional staff

7 new Premium stations

Regional trains

Mildura rail upgrade (freight only)

Build station at Ballarat West

Regional buses

Upgrade to services (few details available)

Rural school bus upgrades

Roads

(It remains the PTUA position that road expansion is vastly expensive and does nothing to alleviate traffic congestion in the long-term.)

Arterial road upgrades

Safer Roads programme



Some level crossing upgrades

Widening of Monash freeway

Deer Park bypass

Westgate bridge reversible lanes

Serious consideration being given to a multi-billion dollar freeway tunnel under Royal Park

Expansion of clear ways, harming local amenity, and bring more induced traffic

Other pledges

TravelSmart programme to continue

Some pedestrian upgrades

Transport interchange upgrades

What the other parties pledged

A summary of all parties' promises, and our evaluation of them, is on our web site:

⇒ www.ptua.org.au/election2006

Connex driving away customers – weekend overcrowding

In the face of regular overcrowding, the PTUA has called for Connex to run six-car trains every weekend on the busiest lines.

Video evidence filmed by the PTUA on a Sunday morning and aired on Channel 7 on 3rd of November showed passengers on the Frankston line, crammed into a short train.

These scenes are familiar to many passengers travelling on weekends.

Every year when the footy season is over, Connex reverts to short trains. Not only do passengers have to stand, often for periods of half an hour or more, but at times some have real difficulty boarding. We are aware of cases when passengers have been left behind on platforms, forced to wait 20 or more minutes for the next service.

With the high price of petrol, discounted tickets such as the Sunday Saver, and free Sunday

travel for the over-sixties, the number of passengers has been climbing. And the abolition of zone 3 next year will make things even worse on the longer lines.

Recent figures showed train patronage has jumped 11 percent in the past 12 months, but there have been no major additions to weekend metropolitan rail schedules since 1999.

While long trains run on days with events such as Spring Carnival racing, an increasing number of less prominent events in Melbourne's CBD has resulted in more train passengers on weekends.

Short trains are not about a lack of trains, lack of track capacity or a



shortage of drivers. It is a blatant failing of our privatised transport system that Connex chooses to save a little money by running short trains, and the government doesn't lift a finger to stop them.

Following the coverage of this story on Channel 7, Connex – apparently embarrassed by the attention – announced they were reviewing the situation.

Watch the video footage:

⇒ www.ptua.org.au/2006/11/03

Summer timetables loom

As we go to press, details of this year's summer timetables are emerging.

All services will be free on Christmas Day, with Sunday timetables operating on most metropolitan services, and a reduced schedule on V/Line.

Trains, trams and buses (including V/Line services to and from Melbourne) will be free on New Year's Eve, and all-night services will be similar to last year. Metropolitan trains will run on a reduced timetable from 2nd of January until mid-February. This raised some eyebrows when initially announced, but the service reductions are much less than previous years, with 17 services suspended for this period (compared with 54 last year). We

understand this is to cater for the Middleborough Road grade separation project.

So while it is good that fewer trains will be suspended, and they will be all running again before university students start back, we are concerned that some lines will see significant gaps in service during peak hour. On the Frankston line, the designated connection to the morning train from Stony Point will not run, with passengers having to wait an extra 17 minutes. There will be a number of long gaps on the Hurstbridge line, only partially compensated by altering other trains to stop at more stations. We hope that Connex and the government will be watching carefully during late-January and February, and will re-instate trains early if

overcrowding occurs on the remaining services.

Trams will run reduced timetables until mid-January, basically Saturday timetables with extra peak services on weekdays.

At the time of writing, information on buses is sketchy, but we understand that while most bus routes will not see cuts, National Bus routes will run two different sets of holiday timetables during December and different parts of January.

So yet again there is no standard approach to summer services. With timetables varying widely in the dates and number of services suspended, it is expected there will be widespread confusion among passengers.

A new climate for transport

Within hours of the result of last month's state election becoming clear, Premier Steve Bracks acknowledged the role of climate policies in his party's historic win. Not only had scorecards from environment groups rated the ALP climate policy more highly than that of the Liberal opposition, anecdotal evidence from within the PTUA showed this was an important factor on polling day, and the election of Victoria's first ever Green parliamentarians added weight to the pro-environment undercurrent.

Less than one month previous, in perhaps the strongest official statement on climate change to date, eminent economist Sir Nicholas Stern published a review of the science and economics of climate change that should leave no-one in any doubt – "The scientific evidence is now overwhelming: climate change presents very serious global risks, and it demands an urgent global response."

While the stationary power sector, responsible for about one quarter of global greenhouse emissions, tends to attract most attention in Australia, the Stern Review also

reveals that the next three largest sectors, transport among them, each account for around 14% of global emissions. Stern goes on to point out that emissions from transport are among the fastest growing in OECD and non-OECD countries alike, and that the sector looks set to maintain this dubious distinction at the head of the greenhouse pollution league table given business as usual conditions. More worrying, given an imminent peak in conventional oil supplies, Stern points out that emissions from transport are likely to be significantly higher than even these worrying forecasts due to the impact of synfuels (oil produced from coal and gas). A study conducted for the Australian Conservation Foundation found that synfuel derived from Victoria's brown coal reserves could produce eight times more carbon emissions than conventional petroleum.

As can be expected from a former World Bank economist, Sir Nicholas' review details the potential role of carbon pricing and financing mechanisms at some length. The review does, however, highlight the role of urban design and land use planning in facilitating

a less energy intensive society. For example, the Stern Review advises that: "[h]igher energy prices and rising congestion require central and municipal planners to develop mass transit systems to cope with inner city and suburban traffic..." and that "[s]uch systems lead to large gains in energy efficiency and reduced emissions as passengers transfer from private cars to public transport." Any government purporting to take climate seriously should heed this advice.

The creation of a climate change portfolio and the appointment of a senior minister to the role are certainly encouraging signs from the Bracks Government hot on the heels of their election win. The challenge will be to ensure the enthusiasm is translated right through other portfolios, including planning, infrastructure and transport, to ensure that priority is given to public transport, walking and cycling over motor vehicles, both physically on the ground and institutionally in the machinery of government. The Bracks Government's success in addressing climate change will be decided in large part by this challenge.

Letter to the editor: PT must be "Elder-friendly"

It is economic sense for the elderly and handicapped to be as independent as possible, especially as they are growing portion of the population, and since many can or should no longer drive, for PT to be Elder-friendly.

Rather the reverse is happening. The smaller coloured railway stations signs time now harder to read with any visual impairment, especially coming into stations and at night.

The small hard convex metal seats and bars for seating are uncomfortable for the elderly and unhealthy when waiting for PT for long periods. Shelters are often oriented and designed without

thought for the weather and winds blowing through. Concourses like Flinders St have no comfortable seating 'in case druggies sleep on it'.

Shifting stops further apart and siting away from transport connections also penalise the elderly as well as shoppers.

Active bike-riders and younger people have more energy to campaign for other glaring PT needs, but these 'minor' things make the elderly more dependent on others because the PT is not for them, as can be observed.

*Val Yule,
Mount Waverley*

We share Val's concerns about some of the "upgrades" to the system making it more difficult some users.

While Metlink assure us that the new signage meets the appropriate standards (and we agree the information conveyed is generally better than the old signage) it remains true that smaller fonts and less contrasting colours have been used in some cases.

Likewise, the removal of tram stops in the name of DDA compliance is something we have regularly campaigned against, and public transport waiting areas must be designed for passengers, not for the benefit of advertising companies.

Inner-city freeway revival – What will Eddington say?

As explained in previous issues of PTUA News, the inner-city freeway link joining the Eastern and Tullamarine Freeways appears to be the next major item on the road lobby's wish list. Early next year the government is set to commence its "East West Needs Assessment" to be undertaken (probably without public input) by Sir Rod Eddington, former chief of British Airways and the author of a new major study into the UK's transport needs.

The community has not yet seen the terms of reference for the East West study. However, the PTUA (together with various community and business groups and local councils) is concerned that the study, like almost all freeway studies before it, is being structured to support a predetermined outcome rather than as a blank-slate, evidence-based assessment. We had supposedly already done the work required when the government's Northern Central City Corridor Study published its draft recommendation that the road not proceed, on the basis that less than 10% of Eastern Freeway traffic was headed further west and most was trying to get to the city centre. It is unclear why another study is required if not to overturn this earlier conclusion.

The route of the proposed freeway lies entirely within the State electorate of Melbourne, which was given the highest chance in the

November election of falling to the Greens. Local candidate Richard di Natale ran on a strong platform of opposing the freeway and appears to have missed winning the seat by just around 1000 votes. Sitting ALP member Bronwyn Pike was forced to publicly deny the existence of freeway plans in order to hang on to her seat, though she is no doubt aware her Cabinet colleagues have declared that the road is on the agenda. (Premier Bracks himself has declared that he is "looking at all options, uninhibited".)

It is interesting to review the conclusions of Rod Eddington's British study, which has been released just in time for Christmas, for clues as to the likely direction of the East West study. In the UK much has been made of the key recommendation that favours road pricing over road building as the appropriate response to congestion. Indeed it is clear that Eddington is a strong supporter of road pricing: that is, the rationing of travel by price instead of by time, on the view that congestion is a social evil rather than just another kind of cost signal restraining rich and poor people alike from excess travel.

But much less is said about the other aspect of the British study, which is that "in a world without road pricing" Eddington still wants to argue for wholesale road expansion. Essentially the report offers just two alternatives: charge

people tolls for driving on any congested road, or build bigger freeways. It is a conclusion that the road lobby would find convenient in the Melbourne context, given the long-standing anti-tolls sentiment among Victorian motorists.

At this stage then it is not entirely clear what conclusions will come from the East West study. It is possible that by commissioning the study the Bracks Government is gearing up for a public debate on environmental road pricing, which is not without its merits if used to recover the indirect costs of road transport and not just as an anti-congestion tool. On the other hand the road lobby are likely to be seeking Eddington's endorsement of the freeway on the basis of alleged freight or economic benefits.

The best we can hope for is that Eddington plays it straight and insists on considering the evidence. After all most people who have, from the Northern Central City Corridor Panel to the City of Melbourne's transport consultant, have already concluded the freeway is unnecessary.

Read the draft Northern Central City Corridor Study

⇒ <http://tinyurl.com/yk2wwy>

Fare reform on the way

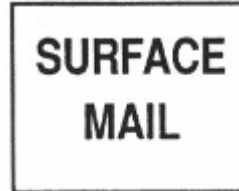
Following the election, this year's fare rise has been deferred until March, and will coincide with the removal of zone 3, cuts to V/Line fares, and Metcards being made valid on Nightrider buses. It is also possible the 12:30am Nightrider

services will be deleted, given trams and trains now both run later on Friday and Saturday nights. We would be hoping these buses be redeployed to run early the next morning, to help fill the gaps before regular services start on Sundays.

Get your Yearly before the next price-rise! Tell your friends! See www.ptua.org.au/members/offers or email tickets@ptua.org.au or contact the Office.

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Inside:

- Batchelor gone: High hopes for new minister
- Transport highlighted on the hustings
 - Weekend train overcrowding

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