

## Summer: Trains breakdown, tracks buckle, industrial disputes – what next?

January and February saw chaos on the rail network, with buckling tracks, trains taken out of service, and power supply problems, resulting in mass disruption.

With peak hour trains often carrying over a thousand people, cancelling just eight trains is the equivalent of shutting the Westgate Freeway for an hour. Some days this summer have seen *hundreds* of cancellations across the network, many of them in peak hour.

Once again a lack of planning has let us down: many Comeng trains had their air conditioners fail in the heat, taking them out of service; rails buckled; Connex claimed vexatious fault reporting added to the mess, and because of recent surges in patronage, each cancelled train had a much bigger impact on passengers than in previous years.

The flaw in the Comeng trains’ air conditioning has been known about for years: as Connex has admitted, they “are only designed to operate up to 35°C”. Despite this, when the trains were refurbished a few years ago, nothing was done to ensure this was fixed. And since the windows will not open, these trains are then taken out of service.

Likewise, it is well-known that railway lines may buckle in the heat. This can be remedied by using concrete sleepers, which can keep the rails in position better than the timber sleepers used on much of the Melbourne rail network. The good news is that the government, initially silent on the issue, has flagged that they have a programme of replacing all the timber sleepers. The bad news is that this won’t be completed until 2024!



Trams and buses weren’t immune. A substantial number of non-air-conditioned trams are still running, and while it might be uncomfortable for passengers, one can only be sympathetic for the large numbers of tram drivers working in these conditions for a entire shift in record high temperatures.

A higher proportion of the bus fleet is air-conditioned. But there were tales of bus engines overheating, unable to cope.

While this summer has seen unprecedented runs of hot days, and February 7<sup>th</sup> was the hottest day on record, hot weather is not unusual in Melbourne in summer. That the public transport network – especially the trains – cannot cope is a damning indictment of continued lack of planning and investment by the government.

As climate change starts to take effect, we can expect more hot days, and higher temperatures. If the city is to function, it is critical that the public transport system be reliable under these conditions.

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## Keeping in touch...

### PTUA office

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### Membership Enquiries

Call or e-mail the office (see above)

PTUA members can obtain cheap yearly Metcards – see  
[www.ptua.org.au/members/offers](http://www.ptua.org.au/members/offers)

### Internet

Our web site is at [www.ptua.org.au](http://www.ptua.org.au)

The PTUA runs email lists for member discussions, and to stay up to date with PTUA events. Members can also view archived newsletters online:  
[www.ptua.org.au/members/resources](http://www.ptua.org.au/members/resources)

## Committee

Daniel Bowen – President  
Tim Petersen – Vice President  
Anthony Morton – Secretary  
Kerryn Wilmot – Treasurer

Myles Green  
Mark Johnson  
Jason King  
Tim Long  
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Vaughan Williams

### Branch convenors:

Paul Westcott – Geelong  
Jeremy Lunn – Outer East

Committee members can be emailed using the format:  
[firstname.lastname@ptua.org.au](mailto:firstname.lastname@ptua.org.au)

## Committee Meetings

Meetings are usually on the fourth Thursday of each month at Ross House. Members are welcome to observe. Please call or e-mail the office for details.

### Branch meetings

#### Outer East:

Third Tuesday of every month, 7pm  
“The Barn” (behind Box Hill Baptist Church)  
3 Ellingworth Parade (off Station St)  
Box Hill

#### Geelong:

First Saturday of every month (except Jan), 10:30am  
Multimedia Room, Courthouse  
Youth Arts Centre  
Corner Gheringhap and Little Malop Streets, Geelong

## Coming events

### Public meeting: Public transport – bring it back into public hands

PTUA secretary Tony Morton will speak at this meeting, along with Greg Barber (Greens MP) and Stephen Jolly (Socialist Party Councillor).

**Where:** Trades Hall, Carlton

**When:** 7pm, Wed 18<sup>th</sup> March

### Climate Change human sign

Show your support for action on climate change.

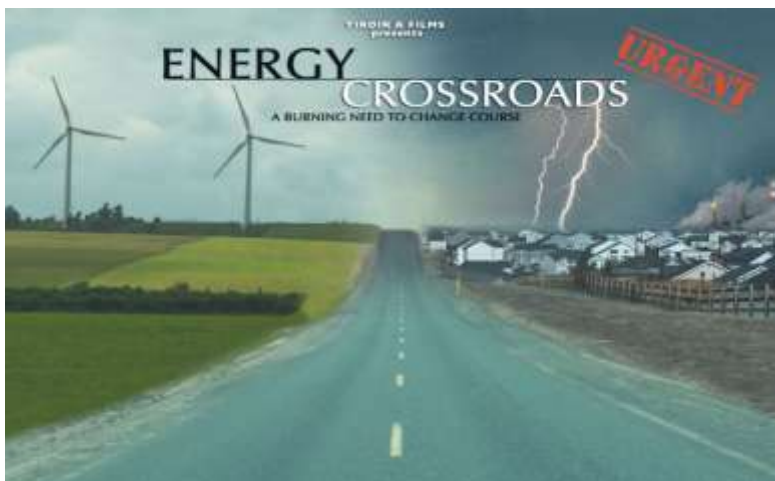
**Where:** St Kilda Beach

**When:** 11am, Sun 17<sup>th</sup> May

**Register:** ⇨ [www.live.org.au](http://www.live.org.au)

### Film screening: Energy Crossroads

“This award-winning documentary exposes the problems associated



with our energy consumption. It also offers concrete solutions for those who want to educate themselves and be part of the solutions in this decisive era.”

Entry by gold coin donation (PTUA members free)

**Where:** Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne

**When:** 6.45pm, Tues 31<sup>st</sup> March

**RSVP:** [office@ptua.org.au](mailto:office@ptua.org.au) or 9650 7898 (just leave a message if unattended)

### More events

For more events related to sustainable transport, check the event calendar at:

⇨ [www.ptua.org.au/about/calendar](http://www.ptua.org.au/about/calendar)

Copy deadline for the next PTUA news is 30<sup>th</sup> April 2008

Newsletter contributors: Daniel Bowen, Tony Morton, Paul Westcott.

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## Is 20/2020 to be dumped?

The Victorian government target of 20% of motorised trips by 2020 is a worthy one. In encapsulates what, if ever achieved, would be a big step forward in providing the kind of public transport that many more people are willing to use than at present. The target was first flagged in 2000 as part of the then Bracks Government's Growing Victoria Together vision.

Thanks to strong CBD employment growth, petrol prices, the parking levy and traffic congestion, public transport patronage into the CBD is booming. And public transport dominates, with a share of more than 75% of trips. Yet this remains the public transport focus of the government: spending billions on rail tunnels in an attempt to convince the last die-hard CBD motorists to get out of their cars.

Meanwhile progress towards the 20% target is slow, with the current overall share of trips by public transport sitting at about 10% (where it has remained for much of this decade; see *PTUA News* July 2008). More modest spending targeted at the vast majority of suburban off-peak, weekend and evening trips, which are generally currently poorly served by public transport, would achieve more gains, but is currently being ignored.

So in a lot of ways, the (lack of) progress towards 20% by 2020 is a genuinely indicative measure of the government's progress to providing all of Melbourne (not just the CBD) with a fully-functional, usable public transport network.

In February 2007, Public Transport Minister Lynne Kosky revealed to

*The Age* that the 20% target was "always aspirational". We all know what it means when politicians refer to an aspirational goal – it means it would be lovely if it happened, but they're not going to do anything to help achieve it.

With John Brumby taking over the helm as Premier, there is now speculation that the whole of Growing Victoria Together is for the chop. In a report in mid-January, *Sunday Age* reporter Melissa Fyfe noted that the strategy was being reviewed and that (perhaps unofficially), bureaucrats have already dumped it.

The question is, will the government take the opportunity to completely abandon what is perhaps the best, most measurable, solid measure of progress on public transport?

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## Decisive action on emissions critical

Following the tragic, catastrophic bushfires around Victoria, debate is raging about whether this is the first big tangible example of the effects of climate change. In an open letter published in *The Age* on February 12th, secretary of the United Firefighters Union of Australia Peter Marshall made a desperate plea to the state and federal governments to act on climate change, and noted that:

*Research by the CSIRO, Climate Institute and the Bushfire Council found that a "low global warming scenario" will see catastrophic fire events happen in parts of regional Victoria every five to seven years by 2020, and every three to four years by 2050, with up to 50 per cent*

*more extreme danger fire days. However, under a "high global warming scenario", catastrophic events are predicted to occur every year in Mildura, and firefighters have been warned to expect up to a 230 per cent increase in extreme danger fire days in Bendigo.*

The sceptics of course argue that it's just a freak occurrence.

Whether or not a definitive link can be proved, it does seem that the heatwave in late-January, the record-breaking 46 degree heat of February 7th and the fires are a stark of example of what dangerous climate change can and will bring in coming decades.

It has never been more important for decisive action on emissions. And with transport accounting for half the average home's emissions, it's going to have to be better than promoting car-pooling and developing hybrid vehicles -- not to mention other household measures such as switching to efficient light bulbs, which save a tiny fraction of the emissions generated from transport.

Prioritising pedestrians and cycling, particularly for short trips, and providing extensive, fast, frequent, clean, cheap public transport networks throughout Australia's cities is vital to this effort.

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## Myki: We told them so

As reported in the media on 3<sup>rd</sup> of March, a study released under Freedom of Information shows that operation of trams will be slower under Myki because of the

requirement for passengers to scan on and off on every trip.

This is precisely what we have been warning the Transport Ticketing

Authority and the government about for years. But it's not too late to change – the scan off requirement could be removed, as it was on London's trams and buses.

## Connecting to the future: An alternative plan

In December the State Government released the *Victorian Transport Plan*: its fourth such plan in seven years. The plan's focus on business-as-usual solutions, dominated by yet more new roads, hardly came as a surprise. But its complete failure to rethink our disastrous approach to transport planning and management – brought home by the catastrophic failure of Melbourne's train system in January – creates an urgent need to articulate and push for real solutions.

It's clear from the spate of plans that the government recognises our transport system is in crisis. Cars and trucks are one of the country's biggest and fastest-growing contributors to climate change, and 'green technology' alone won't deliver anything like the big cuts in carbon emissions we urgently need. Meanwhile, a decade of privatised mismanagement has left us without sufficient trains to relieve peak-hour overcrowding. Traffic congestion is an ongoing problem, and a succession of 'congestion-busting' motorway projects has only made the problem worse. And while the global financial crisis has brought oil prices down from the unprecedented levels of 2008, it's clear the low prices won't survive when conditions improve.

Yet if the crisis is obvious, it's also obvious the government hasn't a clue how to solve it. Instead we've been told, in plan after plan after plan, to swallow the same medicine that got us in trouble in the first place. The latest prescription would give Melbourne more kilometres of motorway per capita than Los Angeles. Meanwhile it will continue to deliver public transport that is slow, infrequent, dirty, unreliable, expensive and sometimes unsafe. Right now the government is engaged in a re-franchising process that will 'lock in' our privatised mess for the foreseeable future.

All this leaves Victorians desperate for an alternative. Our last major

PTUA policy document, *It's Time To Move*, coincided with the release of *Melbourne 2030* back in 2002. It's now well due for an update given the changes to the transport landscape since then. We've seen new growth in peak hour patronage, back-peddalling on new rail extensions, the wholehearted embrace of outrageously expensive 'white elephant' road and rail projects, and snowballing evidence of the failure of privatisation.

Our new report *Connecting to the Future* outlines the major issues in our transport crisis, and explores the roots of the problem: the way our government, obsessed as it is with roads and privatisation, has spent a decade peddling urban mythology and spin-ridden plans to distract the public from demanding real solutions. We outline the key ingredients of a proper solution, based on best practice elsewhere:

- A central public authority to coordinate public transport planning and take responsibility out of the hands of private operators.
- 'Every 10 Minutes to Everywhere': a 21st-century public transport network with trains, trams and buses coordinating to provide go-anywhere-anytime convenience for travel across Melbourne.
- A revived regional Victorian network that benefits everyone: not only those who commute from large regional cities to Melbourne but also those living and working within these cities and in the broader regions.
- Fair fares, a ticketing system that works without costing the earth, and the return of station staff and tram conductors to improve safety, service and carrying capacity.
- Walking and cycling taken seriously as transport modes, supported with proper levels of

investment and with pedestrian-friendly and bike-friendly system design.

- Freight transport policies that recognise the futility of trying to speed up freight with new roads that encourage growth in private car traffic. Sustainable measures include the introduction of a level playing field for road and rail freight charges, higher 'load utilisation' of freight vehicles, and priority measures for freight on the existing motorway network.
- Road planning that focuses on effective utilisation of the road network by cars and trucks, rather than endless growth in traffic.
- Land-use planning that accommodates both 'urbanist' and 'suburbanist' styles of living, recognises that good public transport is compatible with the population densities traditionally found in Australian cities, and ensures adequate services are provided in tandem with new developments.

With demand for public transport now growing healthily and more Victorians than ever willing to accept an alternative to the car when at last it appears, it is clearer than ever that better public transport will not cost the earth. In the context of a \$38 billion 'transport plan' that promises no better than business-as-usual, it should be obvious that such a huge sum of money could be much better employed to deliver sustainable transport on an ongoing basis.

Of course, none of this will happen without concerted action by citizens to bring about major changes. With this new report we aim to provide all Victorians with the resources they need to help change transport policy for the better.

⇒ [www.ptua.org.au/publications](http://www.ptua.org.au/publications)

## Smartbus an improvement, could be smarter

Smartbus services continue to get rolled out at a glacial pace. As each route is upgraded, patronage continues to grow, showing that the time and investment going into Smartbus is well worth the money. In particular the upgrades to service frequency, providing buses every 15 minutes on weekdays, is attractive to passengers.

Yet even these flagship bus routes are poor cousins compared to the services on Melbourne's trams.

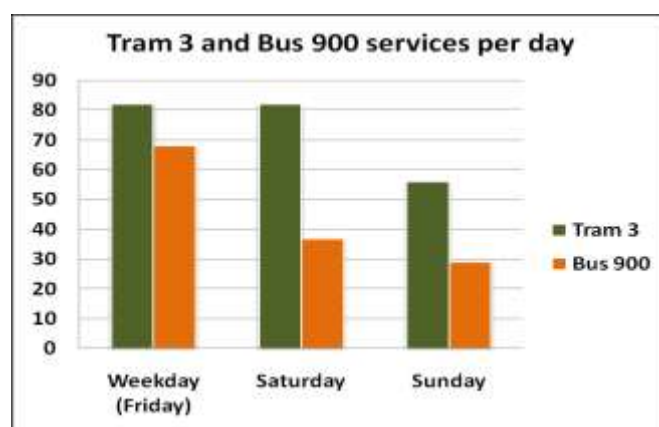
Compare, for instance, the Caulfield to Rowville 900 bus, and the tram

service it connects with, route 3. Tram 3 is not even one of Melbourne's most frequent, yet the services are clearly superior – see table below.

While it's true that tram 3 serves Melbourne's inner-suburbs and the CBD, Smartbus 900 serves very big traffic generators, including Australia's largest shopping centre at Chadstone, two campuses of Monash University, and other major shopping centres at Oakleigh and Rowville.

Smartbus is a step forward for Melbourne's buses, but what will really make a difference and get more passengers on-board is "tram-like" services right across Melbourne – frequent services 7-days-a-week along every arterial road. With most of Melbourne being beyond walking distance of the trams and trains, until a fully comprehensive bus service is provided, most of the city will continue to be car-dependent.

Route comparison	Tram 3	Bus 900
Peak hour frequency	10 mins	15 mins
Weekday off-peak frequency	12 mins	15 mins
Weekday evening frequency	20 mins	30 mins
Last service weekdays (Mon-Thu)	12:12am	11:47pm
Saturday frequency (day)	12 mins	30 mins
Last service Saturday	1:20am	11:44pm
Sunday frequency (PM)	12 mins	30 mins
Last service Sunday	11:54pm	9:14pm



## Recently...

### ABC Online

PTUA Secretary Tony Morton had an article published by the ABC's Unleashed online forum on 30<sup>th</sup> January which sparked plenty of discussion on the meltdown of train services. It can be viewed at:

[www.abc.net.au/unleashed/stories/s2478629.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/stories/s2478629.htm)

### Sustainable Living Festival

The PTUA once again had a stall at the Sustainable Living Festival in Federation Square in February. Fine weather meant bigger crowds than in previous years, including a number of new members.

Many passers-by said hello and expressed their support for the work the PTUA is doing.



### Protest

PTUA participated in a joint protest with water and climate change campaigners on the steps of parliament on February 3<sup>rd</sup>. PTUA

President Daniel Bowen addressed the crowd, with other speakers pointing out that Connex's parent company Veolia is in the running to manage the government's proposed desalination plant.

# Big spending plan falls short on public transport

*This article by PTUA President Daniel Bowen was originally published in Planning News, the newsletter of the Planning Institute of Australia, Victorian Division, February 2009.*

With the Victorian government's vision for transport coming in at a grand total of some \$38 billion, one might imagine that once implemented it would leave Melbourne (and Victoria) with the best transport system in the world. A system where public transport reaches across the city, allowing anybody to get from anywhere to anywhere quickly and conveniently, without waiting for connecting services or even needing to look at a timetable.

Sadly it falls well short.

While there are some welcome public transport upgrades, including the long-overdue South Morang rail extension, as well as extending suburban trains to Sunbury, Melton and Cranbourne East, these will fall short of the amended Urban Growth Boundary, and come with astronomical price tags attached. The Regional Rail Link (aka the Tarneit link) including tracks all the way into the city, comes in at a massive \$4 billion. And the first half of the city rail tunnel proposed by Eddington will cost \$4.9 billion.

Nobody can deny a lot of money will be spent on public transport -- that is if all the proposals happen, which is uncertain for those dependent on Federal funding. But the outcomes for many of these projects are unclear.

Doubters have consistently argued that there is a lot of scope to boost CBD rail capacity with minor infrastructure spending and operational changes, such as staffing all stations to help with loading, duplicating single track and running more trains direct to Flinders Street, before spending billions on rail tunnels.[1]

And while one can understand the theory of the Regional Rail Link to speed up V/Line services, the route via Tarneit means it is questionable whether passengers from Geelong will actually save any time at all -- let alone if those trains have to stop to pick up passengers on the way through the new suburbs.

The massive rail projects will suck up funds while Melburnians in bus-only suburbs will see few upgrades to their local services. Most car-dependent residents will find that their only nearby public transport service will continue to be a bus route running only every 30 to 60 minutes, with most stopping by 9pm at night.

There will be no tram extensions at all, and the "blue orbital" Smartbus project has been shelved.

Most of the other planned Smartbus routes will be rolled-out, at the current glacial pace. But the vast majority of the bus network, which around eighty percent of Melbourne relies on[2], will continue to have infrequent services.

The flip side of the transport plan is a big programme of motorway construction. Virtually every freeway link the most enthusiastic roads supporter could have ever wanted is in here, including some that haven't been on the table before. The so-called "missing link" motorway which will plough through the Yarra Flats is included, as is the Frankston Freeway (now called the "Peninsula Link"). There is a proposal for a pseudo-freeway along Hoddle Street that will chop Collingwood in two, and investigation into a massive Outer Ring Road which if ever built would be over 70 kilometres long.

And a road tunnel under Footscray to the docks (but which will result in a number of homes in West Footscray being bulldozed), which is really the first stage of Eddington's controversial East-West motorway tunnel.

Despite the spin, it's not hard to see what the priorities of the Victorian government's transport plan really are when one realises that it flags construction of 122 kilometres of motorways, but just 36 kilometres of new railways, and no new tram or lightrail lines at all. In the context of a city which already has more road space per capita than most, this doesn't make sense.

Ultimately, transport is a supply-led commodity. History has shown us, in Melbourne and elsewhere, that if you provide decent public transport, people will use it. Conversely if you provide more roads, people will use them. Even its strongest supporters admit the extra capacity provided by the \$1.4 billion M1 widening will be full within five years.[3]

But do we want more people using more roads? From an oil vulnerability view, no. And given transport makes up around half of the average household's greenhouse gas emissions[4], from a climate change view, more roads are the last thing we need.

Recent growth in CBD employment and high petrol prices last year got more people onto public transport, with trains trams and buses now accounting for more than three-quarters of daily CBD visitors. But for most other trips around Melbourne, the car is king, and the government obviously has no plans to change that. A 2006 study showed that -- even in peak hour -- waiting times on 78 per cent of Melbourne's public transport routes exceeds 15 minutes.[6]

Particularly in Melbourne's outer suburbs, the car will remain king, with all the obvious resultant problems: traffic congestion, pollution and emissions, vulnerability to future oil price rises, and lack of access to employment and recreation and education for those who can't drive.

**Continued page 7⇒**

## Geelong Branch: Bus route reform and Myki

At last Geelong Council has decided to put the central bus interchange back in Moorabool Street. It's not quite the optimum set-up, with east and west side stops to be split on either side of Little Malop Street. This was a compromise hammered out over Christmas, arising from the opinion of the City's Traffic Management department there would be difficulties for any buses leaving the kerb and immediately turning right into Malop Street (not that any do at the moment!).

The Branch issued a media release congratulating the new Council on

the decision, following almost four years of inaction, and urging them to now lobby for 10 - 15 minute services on major routes. It's a relief that we have some new councillors who seem to take PT seriously - one even uses it!

A "Myki shop" has been opened at 129 Ryrie Street, and as-of the start of March, Myki is now in use on all Geelong bus routes, following several months of use on Bellarine Peninsula routes. The Transport Ticketing Authority is clearly introducing the system very gradually, trying to avoid any of the

adverse publicity that has marred the whole scheme so far.

The introduction of Myki initially only on Bellarine Peninsula buses had meant that anyone with a Myki card could ride for free on the whole Geelong urban network. Drivers of "non-Myki" buses could not tell if the holder of a Myki still had time left on their two-hour cap so they'd been told to allow any Myki holder to board - one way of getting Myki more widely distributed!

⇒[www.ptua.org.au/geelong](http://www.ptua.org.au/geelong)

## Big spending plan falls short on public transport

⇐Continued from page 6

So what is the solution?

Instead of splurging tens of billions on motorways that encourage more driving, and over-the-top rail infrastructure, we should have had world-class public transport right across Melbourne. Trams, trains and arterial road buses running at least every ten minutes until midnight, seven days-a-week, would make leaving the car at home a real option for all Melburnians. It would make all journeys -- not just those into the CBD -- easy by public transport. It would help Melburnians save money by keeping less cars in the garage, and slash greenhouse emissions.

And because the bulk of the rail and tram fleet and infrastructure required to do it is already in place, it is readily affordable, for just the cost of more drivers and maintenance staff, and some extra buses. Indeed, with some skilful planning, most of a high frequency city-wide service could be in place within about two years.[7]

Efficient cities require efficient public transport networks -- not just for those lucky enough to live in suburbs that had trains and trams installed by the 1930s, but for the whole city.

But until it arrives, most of Melbourne's suburbs will keep crying out for real transport options and solutions.

### Footnotes

[1] Getting Melbourne's Rail System on Track  
⇒[www.ptua.org.au/publications/melb-rail-on-track/](http://www.ptua.org.au/publications/melb-rail-on-track/)

[2] BusVic analysis of 2006 Census data  
⇒[www.tinyurl.com/cw892p](http://www.tinyurl.com/cw892p)

[3] RACV, quoted in "Traffic on Melbourne's West Gate Bridge slows under heavy load", Herald Sun, 18/2/2008

[4] CSIRO National Kilowatt Count of Household Energy Use  
⇒[www.ptua.org.au/myths/greenhouse.shtml](http://www.ptua.org.au/myths/greenhouse.shtml)

[6] Government plan fails 15 minute test  
⇒[www.ptua.org.au/2006/08/20/study-15min-routes/](http://www.ptua.org.au/2006/08/20/study-15min-routes/)

[7] The plan for "Every 10 Minutes to Everywhere"  
⇒[www.ptua.org.au/campaigns/every10minutes/plan/](http://www.ptua.org.au/campaigns/every10minutes/plan/)

Saturday and Public Holidays(1)		Sunday and Public Holidays(2)	
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# PTUA News

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## Inside:

- Summer chaos
- 20/2020 target to be dumped?
  - Connecting the future

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### Join us

If you are reading a friend's newsletter and would like to join and help the fight for better public transport, it's \$25 per year (\$12 concession). Call the office, or see [www.ptua.org.au/join](http://www.ptua.org.au/join)