

## New Minister: Same old policy

When Peter Batchelor was shunted out of the Transport ministry after the 2006 election, the PTUA had high hopes for his replacement, Lynne Kosky.

The signs at the time appeared positive: after six years of post-privatisation neglect of the portfolio, public transport had emerged as an important election issue. And Kosky had amassed strong reform credentials as Steve Bracks' hard-nosed Minister for Education.

Unfortunately, any hope we had that the transport portfolio would show renewed strength and success—not just excusing the mediocre *status quo*—were dashed when it became clear the new Minister was following the same bad advice that is to blame for the problems.

It cannot be doubted that since 2006, public transport has been the target of a new wave of political largesse. But closer scrutiny of the *Victorian Transport Plan* reveals it is driven by the need for a political fix for the most dire of the current difficulties, peak hour train overcrowding. It adopts the recommendations of the Eddington *Investing in Transport* report, which assumed there could be little role for public transport beyond peak-hour CBD commuting, and forecast virtually zero mode shift to public transport by 2030. As our article on page 6 reveals, the flagship Regional Rail Link appears to have gained \$3.2 billion of Federal funding on the strength of construction plans alone—the way a freeway might—without any thought to how services will be designed around the link.

The new Minister is former union official Martin Pakula. To date, his public comments have emphasised continuity with Kosky's legacy, and moving ahead with the *Victorian Transport Plan*. The clear message is: don't expect any big changes.

In reality, there has been far less change from the Batchelor era than the current flurry of activity would suggest. Pakula's first big political challenge will be to tame (or slay) the Myki monster, which has been a great source of recent embarrassment, but began as a Batchelor initiative from 2004. Train overcrowding, similarly, is a consequence of the premature scrapping of rolling stock between 2002 and 2005, under Batchelor's watch.



Minister Pakula doubtless intends not to be another Batchelor or Kosky, to retire or be moved on amid a wave of public discontent. If so he will need to do what his predecessors did not, and confront the planning and management failures of his Department head-on. In short, he must prepare to make changes. To start with, he could learn from those places where successful public transport operates in lower-density urban regions, and establish an independent public agency, staffed by competent experts, to plan the network properly.

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## Keeping in touch:

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Email: [office@ptua.org.au](mailto:office@ptua.org.au)

### Membership Enquiries

Call or email the office (see above).

### Commuter Club

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

### Internet

Our website 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. See: [www.ptua.org.au/members/resources](http://www.ptua.org.au/members/resources).

## Committee

Daniel Bowen—President  
Tony Morton—Secretary  
Kerryn Wilmot—Treasurer  
Michael Galea  
Ian Hundley  
Mark Johnson  
Jason King  
Tim Long  
Rob Meredith  
Tim Petersen  
David Robertson  
Vaughan Williams

### Branch convenors

Paul Westcott—Geelong  
Jeremy Lunn—Eastern Suburbs

### Contact

All committee members can be emailed using the format `firstname.lastname@ptua.org.au`.

## Member Meetings

### Melbourne

Dates / times as advised  
Ross House  
247 Flinders Lane, City  
*More details: see below*

### Eastern Suburbs

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

## PTUA makes plans for 2010

**In January, the PTUA Committee held its annual planning retreat, to decide campaign priorities for 2010.**

A clear priority for the year is set by the State election that we know will occur on 27 November. A Federal election this year also looks very likely. Clearly, the direction of both State and Federal transport policy will have important consequences for the public transport network. A commitment by successful State election candidates this year to overhaul the planning of public transport is the best hope we have for change. But even if the State government is reluctant to make the necessary reforms, the Federal government can still insist on best-practice planning as a condition of its funding of transport projects—a concept supported by last year's Senate inquiry into public transport services.

Members can therefore expect the PTUA to be active in the lead-up to the State and Federal elections, as we work with all political parties and candidates

to press for change. Naturally, our activities will be strategically directed to where we think there is most potential to achieve a shift in political priorities. We will be in contact with members during the year to let you know how you can assist with campaigns.

As always, we have conducted a review of our organisational effectiveness and internal operations. Of the Member's Meetings we conducted last year, some were very well-attended and others far less so. This year, we will schedule a member's meeting shortly after each newsletter, each with a specified topic of current interest.

The PTUA Committee welcomes members' feedback on our activities, either at a meeting or through our office: email [office@ptua.org.au](mailto:office@ptua.org.au).

### Tell us your stories of planning failures

To assist with our campaigns and media activities, we are asking members to share with us their everyday experiences of awful public transport: in particular, incidents where a little attention

to network planning could have made things work properly.

Did your bus today arrive at the station as the train was leaving? Do you rely on a 45-minute bus route trying to coordinate with a 20-minute train service? Is your 'local' station impossible to reach other than by car? Please tell us: email [office@ptua.org.au](mailto:office@ptua.org.au).

### Next members' meeting: 11 March

Our first members' meeting for the year will be a discussion about Yarra Trams with the new operator. It is scheduled for Thursday 11 March, at 6pm, in the Mezzanine Meeting Room, Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane (enter via ground floor entrance). It should run for about an hour.

Linda Nicholls AO, Chairman of KDR Victoria, will talk to us about Yarra Trams' approach and philosophy and share her customer service experience.

This will not be a discussion of technical matters. However, Committee members will be on hand as always to answer members' questions on current issues.

## Public transport and the Altona byelection

**Public transport was a high profile issue in the recent Altona byelection triggered by the retirement in January of the local member and Public Transport Minister, Lynne Kosky.**

Candidates were virtually unanimous in citing problems with public transport provision, including a (somewhat nuanced) acknowledgement from the candidate representing the incumbent ALP government.

Liberal candidate Mark Rose said: “the residents of Altona deserve a public transport service that isn’t a mess. It is not good enough that our trains are overcrowded and unreliable. We need a better and more efficient transport system.”

Greens candidate David Strangwood said: “People are flocking to our area but everyone knows there needs to be long-term planning, like trains that turn up reliably, and often.” He promised

“a bus that connects with every train, morning till night—so you have a choice to leave the car behind.”

The ultimately successful ALP candidate Jill Hennessy reportedly said that public transport in Altona is “good, but could be better.” Altona, like most Melbourne suburbs, is somewhat mixed in its public transport fortunes. Some of the more established areas of the electorate, principally in the north-east, are better served with public transport, both rail and bus. But much of the electorate, which will continue to experience a large population influx on greenfields development sites, faces monumental transport problems.

Buses and trains are the two public transport modes in Altona. Direct access to rail in the electorate is limited—at Altona, Westona, Laverton and Aircraft. Thus local residents must rely on good bus services, which are severely

lacking at present. Six of eleven route bus services in the electorate do not meet notional minimum service standards enunciated by the government for Monday to Friday and for Saturday services. Eight of these services do not meet these standards on Sundays; four do not even run on Sundays. The Altona Smartbus itself doesn’t meet the government’s own standards for Smartbus service, failing to provide a 15 minute service on weekdays before 11am. And most services are far more thinly spread than the maximum 400 metres walking distance laid down by the government.

The residential and retail developments in many parts of the electorate were not developed with public transport in mind at all. This is powerfully illustrated by the poor configuration of the road network in many housing developments which militates against direct services within easy walking distance of users.



## New train operator endorses ‘Every 10 Minutes’ plan

**The PTUA has commended Melbourne’s new train operator, Metro Trains Melbourne, for its support of the ‘Every 10 Minutes to Everywhere’ campaign.**

In a statement to *The Age* on 16 January, Metro Trains chief executive Andrew Lezala referred to our campaign to run trains, trams and buses every 10 minutes, and said “this was the correct approach.” “I like the tram network because the frequency is such that you do not need to understand the timetable.” The train network needed that frequency, he said.

We urge the State Government to fol-

low suit, and throw its own weight behind the campaign. The government has been so conditioned to public transport failure that in many years of the PTUA saying Melbourne needs this kind of approach, they have had no response other than to stonewall and ridicule. Now there is the will to transform the system, thanks to new voices from outside Melbourne.

Last year’s Senate inquiry into public transport management found that an independent planning authority, such as operates in Perth and in other cities around the world, had the greatest potential for fixing the system. This kind

of body would work with public and private operators to simplify timetables and get the trains, trams and buses working together to provide a seamless network for all Melburnians: morning, noon and night.



# Melbourne Myki mayhem

**Myki's been running for two months on Melbourne's trains, and the brave souls who have been using it have found similar problems to those seen in regional cities over the past year or so.**

Problems have included slow and non-responding scanners; cases of default fares being charged where they shouldn't; and (predictably) widespread confusion over the introduction of the system by half measures. At the time of going to press, it is still valid only on trains, despite most trams and bus scanners being switched-on and saying "Please touch your card here."

Other issues relate to the design of the system. The touch-on and touch-off scanner beeps are identical, despite the importance of being able to distinguish between these actions. Scanners display the amount charged for a trip (for example \$2.94), but not what the fare is (2 hour zone 1, expires 11am), causing uncertainty over the fares being charged. And of course the requirement to touch-off is expected to cause delays on busy trams and buses.

The web site has emerged as a major source of frustration for users, with confusing jargon, incomplete travel history information, and incompatibility with some web browsers. But most serious of all is the long and unpredictable delays between users topping up their cards online and having the funds available for travel, and in a number of cases, the money disappearing completely.

The performance of the Myki Call Centre has also been criticised, with staff apparently unable to solve anything but the simplest problems. In some cases rather than try and fix an existing card, they elect to send out a new one: surely a waste of money. In others they raise a 'service request' to get problems fixed, with mixed results. Many problems remain unsolved; some customers receive

irrelevant email responses which do not address their enquiry.

The Transport Ticketing Authority has responded to some of these problems, noting that the web site is in the process of being re-worked, that upgrades are in progress to speed up the scanners, and that they are posting more information on trams and buses to remind users that Myki is not yet valid on those vehicles.

These, of course, are the measures that should have been taken before the system was switched on in Melbourne (or, for that matter, regional Victoria). The government's half-baked rollout in an attempt to beat their own self-imposed "by the end of 2009" deadline has led to this mess.

In early February the new Minister Martin Pakula sacked TTA head Gary Thwaites, replacing him with Metlink boss Bernie Carolan. Carolan has a reasonably good track record at Metlink, but will need to work hard to get Myki's many problems fixed.

It's not all bad news: those who have used the system on trains and steered clear of the web site have reported that the system has been pretty reliable. The vast majority of transactions are charged correctly, and the speed of scanners (including retrofitted Metcard gates) is steadily improving.

But there are enough problems that if large numbers of people were using it, it could cause long delays at busy stations. Perhaps it's just as well that, as the Herald Sun reported on 11 February, it's believed only 3% of the Myki cards issued are being used regularly.

**The PTUA's advice to passengers is to steer clear of Myki, and keep using Metcards for now.** While it makes sense to get a Myki card during one of the free offer periods (the one in January is expected to be repeated later in the year), we recommend sticking it in a drawer for a few months, as there are still significant problems.

- Commuter Club and other Yearly tickets will be replaced for free with

Myki cards later this year.

- Read more on Myki's problems on our web site: [www.ptua.org.au/2010/01/29/](http://www.ptua.org.au/2010/01/29/)
- Still confused about how Myki will work? Try our Q+A: [www.ptua.org.au/2009/11/18/myki-qa/](http://www.ptua.org.au/2009/11/18/myki-qa/)

## Suburban bus reviews

The government is rushing to complete its metropolitan bus reviews. This has come at the expense of the two-step public meeting process, applied for most of the 16 reviews. It was dispensed with just before Christmas in the review of bus services in the cities of Melbourne, Yarra, Port Phillip, Moreland, Banyule and Darebin.

The process commenced in 2007 and is scheduled for completion this year. To date, however, final reports had been announced for only six reviews. Funding of \$500 million has been allocated for bus service changes in the Victorian Transport Plan. This compares with \$760 million for Peninsula Link and \$6 billion for the proposed north-east freeway link.

Bus services have been the poorest of the poor cousins in Melbourne's public transport system, despite much of Melbourne having access only to buses, with no trams or trains. As the SmartBus services demonstrate, patronage growth is strongly related to service frequency. Simply tinkering at the edges of existing services will not improve access and effectiveness of bus services.

Lack of funding is not the only issue: reviews have been conducted in a manner contrary to good integrated network planning. Effective linkages with other bus and rail services are not considered, and the emphasis is on single point-to-point journeys rather than the effectiveness of the resulting network.

## Growing support for rail gauge standardisation

**The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF)—the state’s peak agriculture industry group—has called for standardisation of Victoria’s regional freight rail network in a submission to the Victorian Government ahead of this year’s state budget.**

The VFF submission notes that standardisation would “reduce the complexity and cost of transporting freight both within the state and nationally,” and allow standard gauge rolling stock from interstate to be used across Victoria.

The new *Northern Victoria Regional Transport Strategy* prepared by the municipalities of Campaspe, Gannawarra, Loddon, Moira, Strathbogie and Greater Shepparton has also identified rail network standardisation as one

of its key strategies, and warned that the break of gauge problem “limits the potential for connectivity interstate and limits the potential for a competitive commercial environment.”

These recommendations echo those of the Victorian Freight and Logistics Council (VFLC) which has described gauge standardisation as its “first rail infrastructure priority.” VFLC CEO Rose Elphick told *Rail Express* last year that standardisation was “long overdue,” and the estimated cost of \$250 million (about one third the cost of the Peninsula Link motorway) was “modest” compared to expenditure on road projects.

Despite promising standardisation as long ago as 2001, the Victorian Govern-

ment has so far failed to follow through on this commitment. Roads, instead, have dominated Victoria’s most recent request to Infrastructure Australia for project funding.

Rail standardisation featured in the PTUA’s submission to Infrastructure Australia in 2008, and the PTUA believes that all new track laid in Victoria—especially if benefiting from federal funding—should provide for future standardisation by using dual gauge sleepers.

We support the VFF in calling on the Victorian Government to fulfil its commitment to standardisation and seek federal support for an investment to improve the productivity and sustainability of the nation’s freight sector.

## Coalition ‘direct action’ plan takes road to climate catastrophe

**The federal coalition, under new leader Tony Abbott, released in February its much anticipated alternative to the federal government’s Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS).**

Rather than limiting total emissions and allocating emission reductions to the lowest cost opportunities as under an emissions trading scheme, the coalition plan proposes an ‘Emissions Reduction Fund’ that will pay polluters who reduce pollution below their ‘business as usual’ trend line. Crucially, the coalition plan will allow polluters to *increase* their emissions above existing levels, and still receive payments from the government, so long as emissions growth is slowed from current growth rates.

In the area of transport, it seems likely that emission reductions below business-as-usual for transport firms (such as freight operators) could be eligible for taxpayer-funded payments from the government. For example, if a trucking firm producing 100,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> each year increased emissions by ‘only’ 10,000 tonnes instead of

the 15,000 tonne increase expected under business-as-usual, taxpayers would pay the firm for the 5,000 tonnes of emissions supposedly avoided. Despite emissions actually increasing, the 110,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> released would not be subject to any form of pricing or emissions limits.

Analysis by Bloomberg New Energy Finance suggests that the coalition’s plan would cost taxpayers \$2 billion more than the government’s CPRS over the first four years of operation.

Although the transport sector has been described as “one of the strongest sources of emissions growth in Australia,” the plan contains little else directly relating to transport. The closest the plan comes to directly addressing transport is the allocation of \$5 million to research into algal synthesis and biofuels. With about one quarter of US grain going into biofuel production, current generation biofuels are now widely recognised as contributing to higher food prices, deforestation and displacement of indigenous communities around the world. Due to the land-

use impacts of current practices, much biofuel production actually results in higher emissions than the conventional fossil fuel it replaces. Recent research has also shown that algal biofuels may be no better for the climate than current generation biofuels due to upstream impacts, such as the demand for fertiliser.

Somewhat peripherally related to transport, the plan also proposes planting 20 million trees by 2020, including urban street plantings and along highways. However it is unclear if these plantings would really proceed under an Abbott government since motoring organisations are calling for trees near roads to be bulldozed for safety reasons. Meanwhile existing carbon sinks such as the Pines Flora and Fauna Reserve near Frankston, the Coomoora Woodland Flora and Fauna Reserve in Keysborough and the Banyule Green Wedge are under threat from proposed motorways. Unfortunately the coalition’s plan offers no protection from the rampant land consumption resulting from car dependence.

# Geelong Branch report

## City bus system, stage 2

The Branch has been talking to the Department of Transport and the bus operators about the second and final stage of the new city bus system, scheduled to start towards the middle of this year.

In a submission to the DoT we outlined what we'd like to see implemented or reinforced in the Stage 2 changes. One of the items was a plan, prepared by PTUA member Gini McLellan, for the consolidation of the scattered bus stops at the Corio shopping centre. Certainly we don't want any further examples of

the inadequate timetabling that was an unfortunate feature of a number of new routes in Stage 1.

## Armstrong Creek car-bound

We are increasingly concerned that the new suburb of Armstrong Creek, to be established to the south of Geelong, and originally touted as a model of sustainable development, is losing the high-quality public transport provision that was supposed to have been a necessary and basic aspect of the scheme. At the urging of developers, the planning panels and bureaucrats have been removing

some key elements of sustainable transport provision.

It seems that the bus services to be initially provided will be no better than the basic 'social service' pattern that we are sadly familiar with. As well, the new railway station to be built on the Warrnambool line, rather than being a genuine transit hub, is now to be surrounded by a car park for 2000 cars!

**The PTUA Geelong Branch meets monthly in Geelong city; see Page 2 for details. Paul Westcott is the branch convenor.**

## Regional Rail Link

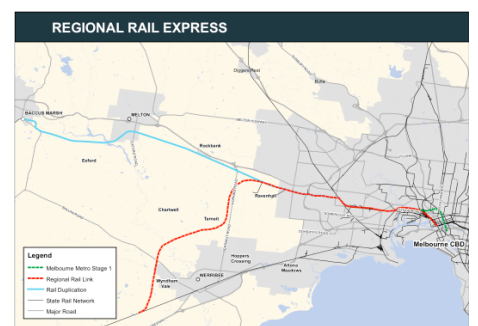
**In December, Daniel Bowen and Paul Westcott met Ray Kinnear, Deputy Director of Public Transport, Strategic Policy and Planning at the Department of Transport.**

Concerns continue about the lack of information about the infrastructure and services planned for the Regional Rail Link (RRL), especially in relation to the Geelong line. We came away with the feeling confirmed that \$3.2 billion has been secured from the Federal government for something that was barely on the drawing board.

The DoT is no longer fostering the impression that the Tarneit line will be an 'express rail' route. All that is now being claimed is that Geelong to Melbourne times will be about the same as at present. Supposedly, the effect on travel times of the Tarneit diversion were modelled by the DoT before the

project was first made public, but given that the route was just a line on a map at that time, the modelling seems to lack credibility.

A bombshell was the revelation that, to save money (in a \$4.2 billion project), no extra platforms are going to be provided at North Melbourne for the RRL, meaning that trains from Geelong, Bendigo and Ballarat won't be able to stop there. It was claimed that Footscray could be the interchange point for RRL and suburban services, but North Melbourne is a very significant interchange station. Indeed it was recently upgraded to enhance that function, including being the starting point for the recently-introduced 401 bus to the hospital and university precinct. And trains to Upfield, Craigieburn and the Racecourse / Showgrounds branch don't run through Footscray.



The Tarneit diversion will bypass Werribee station, but what will be done about the 1500 trips per week to and from Werribee on V/Line services has not been worked out yet. The Tarneit line will not be electrified, so the likelihood is that those travelling to Werribee will have to take a bus to and from Wyndham Vale, the first station on the new line. That is a journey of over seven kilometres, taking at least 15 minutes—a dramatic downgrading of the current provision, and a disincentive to public transport use.

## Swanston Street likely to become car-free

**In what should be a model for community-conscious planning processes, the City of Melbourne is forging ahead with a 'transit mall' plan for Swanston Street, modelled on 'Option 6' in its consultation process from last year.**

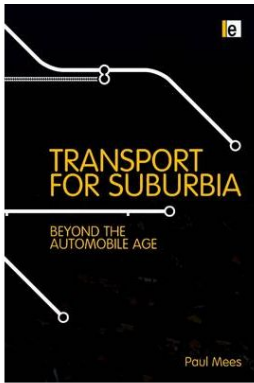
Lord Mayor Robert Doyle, after cam-

paing during his election to return cars to Swanston Street, has admitted to a "Road to Damascus" conversion on the issue. Having spoken to other city mayors in Copenhagen late last year, he admits to having learned that the world's great cities today do not seek to funnel more cars into their centres.

The proposal now before Council has one drawback: it effectively removes the tram stop at Lonsdale Street (losing the logical one-stop-per-block pattern), while shifting the locations of others in a way that makes interchange more difficult at places like Bourke Street. This is not an essential feature of the design: it could and should be rethought.

# Why is Zurich not like LA? Hint: it's not density

*Transport for Suburbia: Beyond the Automobile Age*, by Paul Mees (Earthscan, 2010)



Ten years ago, *PTUA News* reviewed Paul Mees' first book, *A Very Public Solution: Transport in the Dispersed City*. Paul was at that time President of the PTUA, and since retiring from that position has continued in his role as an 'activist academic', helping to develop the rigorous foundation for good pub-

lic transport in cities like Melbourne—cities without the 'natural advantage' of high urban densities that exist in cities like Tokyo and Hong Kong.

Paul's new book *Transport for Suburbia* builds on the theme developed in his first book. The detailed comparison between Melbourne and Toronto—demonstrating that Toronto's superior rate of public transport use has nothing to do with density and everything to do with high-quality service—is further developed, and generalised. There are detailed discussions of other 'dispersed' regions with high public transport use, such as Vancouver, Ottawa, Curitiba in Brazil, and rural Switzerland. These examples are used to support the development of a general theory of 'network planning'—the seam-

less integration of services under public control found in all these places.

The theme running through the book is that "density is not destiny." Using recent statistics, Paul shows that Los Angeles is overall more dense than New York—because New York's high-density boroughs are surrounded by very low-density suburbia. The Canton of Zurich, where every settlement of 300 people or more must be provided with a basic level of public transport, and more than 50% take public transport to work, has an urban density not much above LA's.

*Transport for Suburbia* is recommended reading for all transport planners, and all those concerned about the sustainability of urban transport in cities like Melbourne.

## In brief. . .

### New Road Operating Plan

The new *Network Operating Plan* being developed by VicRoads was recently given an airing in the media.

The plan is essentially a revision to the 'hierarchy of roads' that attempts to account for road users other than motorists. So it designates that some roads will have public transport as their primary use, some will emphasise pedestrian activity, while others (likely most) will continue to have car and truck use as primary.

Apparently the plan does allow for mixed uses to be given proper weight, as when an arterial road also carries a number of bus routes. This is essential to the workability of any framework of this sort, since not all uses of roads are complementary—conflict inevitably arises, as for example when a

key tram route intersects a 'city bypass' road used primarily by cars.

It is unclear at this stage whether this is a genuine transformation in favour of sustainable road planning, or simply a tweak to current practices that redesignates a relative handful of roads. The devil will be in the detail, and we will closely scrutinise the outcomes of this new plan.

### Nunawading grade separation

With considerable fanfare on 4 January, Roads Minister Tim Pallas announced the closure of the Springvale Road boom gates at Nunawading. He said that the joint state and federally funded project, which included the fit-out of the new Nunawading Premium railway station on the western side of Springvale Road, would be completed in the next ten days.

However, in mid-February the finali-

sation of the project still appeared a month away with construction work on car parks, a passenger waiting area and other elements of the station still continuing. The precinct was identified as a major activity centre under Melbourne 2030 and a Structure Plan was recently completed for the area by the City of Whitehorse. The plan sought to address walking and cycling access to the old station on the eastern side of Springvale Road. However, the new station is on the western side of Springvale Road, with quite indirect access to the east.

The many retail establishments in the area face roads, include sprawling car parks, and turn their back on the Nunawading station, the legacy of bad planning decisions over many years. It is doubtful whether things are about to get any better, with the three levels of government having not been in lock step to provide satisfactorily integrated transport facilities at Nunawading.

**Copy deadline for the next PTUA News is 9 April 2010.**

Newsletter contributors: Daniel Bowen, Ian Hundley, Tony Morton and Paul Westcott.

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### Inside . . .

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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).

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