



# Secret Public Transport Business: Footscray homes to go for RRL

The secretive, defensive bureaucratic mindset that afflicts transport planning in Victoria played out in dramatic fashion earlier this month, as Footscray residents whose homes are likely to be acquired for the Regional Rail Link learned this for the first time—not from the government but from the media.

The Victorian community is used to the idea that transport projects are planned out and their effects understood well ahead of any application for funding. This has been the case with every major road project in Victoria, as well as the underground City Loop in the 1970s. Yet despite the Regional Rail Link having been funded in last year’s Federal budget, there has been scant information in the public domain about the actual route, the train services to be provided, its environmental effects and the properties and sensitive areas likely to be affected. The message from our own meetings with RRL officials is that these were still works in progress.

Until this month, the information available suggested that while people’s homes were potentially threatened by the route through Footscray, the most likely threat was to Railway Place, on the north side of the existing rail corridor nearer the Maribyrnong River. Residents in this area have been running a campaign, drawing attention to the under-utilised pair of tracks that run from the west through the Bunbury Street tunnel and across the river toward the city. Currently, these tracks are leased to the Australian Rail Track Corporation to run a handful of freight trains and passenger services from Sydney, Adelaide and Albury. It has been correctly pointed out that with a shift from road to rail freight at the Port of Melbourne, the number of freight trains will increase to take up much of the spare capacity. Nonetheless, there has been no serious study of this question—in particular the extent to which freight movements would be required in peak hours where capacity shortages occur.

It was only on 12 July that the government was able to say which houses would have to make way for the RRL route: and these were not in Railway Place but in Buckley Street on the opposite side of central Footscray. In its determination to control the publicity for its decision, the government did not forewarn residents, but instead dispatched public servants to doorknock while (or even some hours after) announcing the

plans at a \$70-per-head lunch. But many residents were denied their formal notification after the officials were ‘scared off’ by the presence of tipped-off media crews.

The whole tawdry episode highlights the Brumby Government’s *modus operandi*, and that of the Bracks Government before it. These are the actions of a government that styles itself as a public-relations outfit, maintaining its power by managing voters’ perceptions of it through spin and propaganda, instead of by governing in the public interest.

Contrast the ‘planning’ of the RRL so far with what an independent, community controlled public agency such as Vancouver’s Translink would have done. First, the starting point itself would have been different: not “What are we going to build?” but “How many people need to go from A to B and how will they do it?” Instead of bureaucrats making up their own answers in secret, an open process would be used to assess future needs and weigh up the capabilities of existing infrastructure to meet them. Only when the alternatives are ruled out would options for new construction be developed and discussed in full public view.

According to former Victorian Government and World Bank transport planner Ed Dotson, in evidence given to the Upper House train inquiry last year, such a process is only what a reasonable person should expect from their planners.

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### 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

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Kerryn Wilmot—Treasurer  
Michael Galea  
Myles Green  
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

Thursday 26 August, 6pm  
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

## Metro CEO faces PTUA members

Metro's presentation to PTUA members on 1 July was generally well-received. It highlighted some of the changes Metro is bringing to the suburban rail network since taking over from Connex last year.

CEO Andrew Lezala displayed graphs showing what we already knew was the case—punctuality and customer satisfaction have steadily declined over the past few years, even while patronage has risen.

He highlighted Metro data on the reasons why trains are late (including Siemens train speed restrictions, long passenger loading times, and problems with infrastructure) and talked about the measures they are putting in place to try and overcome them. Siemens trains are likely to get tram-style sand equipment to help with their brakes, and many parts of the network are getting infrastructure upgrades to improve reliability.

Meanwhile the government has a number of projects underway to expand ca-

capacity (see the July 2009 newsletter), which Metro believes will help improve train system reliability. (As we always stress, poor infrastructure is a consequence of long-term government failure which can't be fobbed off to a private operator.)

There was some discussion around the new timetables on the Dandenong and Frankston lines, with others likely to see similar changes. The Werribee and Sydenham lines will get new timetables later this year; others will follow next year. In the longer term the prospect of transforming the network to a 'Metro-style' service was flagged, with the possibility of two-tier services—high-capacity stopping trains for the inner-suburbs, and express trains for the outer-suburbs.

Metro has also been putting on more staff at CBD stations, including St John Ambulance at some locations, and "proactively" deploying maintenance staff in an effort to improve punctuality and reliability on the system.

Mr Lezala was kind enough to take questions from the audience, with feedback afterwards suggesting most mem-

bers appreciated that he was happy to give straight answers, rather than spin.

Obviously a number of the improvements Metro would like to make are dependent on government funding, and it's a reminder that PTUA and its members must keep up the political pressure to ensure that the rail system improves.

## Next meeting: on the buses

**Our next members' meeting is scheduled for Thursday 26 August.**

Speaking will be Chris Loader, Manager of Transport Planning and Policy at BusVic, the Bus Association of Victoria. Prior to joining BusVic, Chris was a PTUA Committee member from 2004 to 2006.

Chris will give us a general update on public transport development from a 'bus' perspective, including recent and planned Smart-Bus upgrades, other projects, patronage trends, and how the bus network is performing. Members are invited to raise their own issues with buses and ask questions.

## Heritage sacrificed for Peninsula tourist road

**The construction of the Brumby government's \$759 million Peninsula Link freeway from Carrum Downs to Dromana hit a snag this month, with protestor resistance to the bulldozing of the heritage listed Westerfield property in Robinsons Road in Frankston South.**

The community picket is being organised by Protectors of Public Lands with the support of the Green Wedges Coalition, the PTUA and other community groups. Opposition MP for Hastings Neale Burgess has also been present, protesting against the top-down process that has led to heritage bushland being taken without community input into decisions.

The project, which largely parallels the Frankston Freeway and Nepean Highway in one of the most public transport starved parts of outer Melbourne, was not included in the Labor government's funding commitments for the 2006 elec-

tion. (Only an EES for the then 'Frankston bypass' was promised.) It has nevertheless proceeded with haste, without proper evaluation and in the absence of any Commonwealth funding support.

The Mornington Peninsula is a declared green wedge; it is not a growth corridor and does not generate large amounts of freight traffic. Peninsula Link is in reality a tourist road, designed to boost weekend and holiday travel by car to the region—and ultimately, drown the Peninsula in traffic every weekend of the year.

In its latest bus reviews the government actively resisted improvements to the 788 Portsea route and other local buses, which would help drive a shift to public transport in the region. In a concession to future needs, an overpass will be provided on the Peninsula Link to cater for future rail electrification to Mornington—but the line itself is still

on the never-never. Ultimately, only better public transport will ensure the things that make the Peninsula a great travel destination are not forever lost.



*A bulldozer poised to start work at Westerfield. These trees may be gone by the time this PTUA News goes to press.*

## Eastern, Peninsula councils lobby for Heidelberg motorway

**Eastern and south-east Melbourne councils have formed a 'South East Integrated Transport Group' (SEITG) to lobby on transport policies. The group's name mirrors that of the former South East Integrated Transport Authority (SEITA, now the Linking Melbourne Authority), and appears to have been constituted for the same purpose: as a silo for the Melbourne road lobby.**

SEITG comprises the municipalities of Casey, Cardinia, Frankston, Kingston, Greater Dandenong, Yarra Ranges, Bass Coast and Mornington Peninsula. (Public-transport conscious Knox is conspicuously absent.) The express purpose of its *South Eastern Transport Strategy* is to "outline a regional perspective on the transport directions established by State and Federal policies." It was prepared in consultation with State transport agencies and coun-

cils, but apparently not with any local representative groups.

As might be expected from a road lobby document, the strategy pays little regard to the fact that outer urban residents suffer most from a lack of public transport, or to the need to address a decline in rail freight capability. Instead, it provides enthusiastic support for a wish list of new roads in outer Melbourne and elsewhere. Increases in road capacity are seen as a viable option for dealing with increased numbers of tourists in the area, including the possible construction of the Rye bypass on the Mornington Peninsula. The strategy also provides unqualified support for the road lobby's latest pet project, the proposed \$6 billion North East Link—despite the fact it passes through none of the council areas in question. The SEITG document recognises that virtually no south-east resi-

dents would use the road if it were to be built, but says nothing about the trashing of large parts of Banyule, Manningham or Nillumbik, and of Yarra Valley parks and bushland.

There is no meaningful discussion in the strategy of the environmental costs of high private motor vehicle use in south-east Melbourne and the central role that good quality public transport plays in alleviating environmental decline. Several publications on climate change, evidently undigested by the authors, are referenced at the end.

The Mornington Peninsula Shire, in its review of the strategy, concluded that "Undertaking the recommended projects will have a number of sustainability outcomes which will generally be positive." Peninsula residents might prefer that their council didn't get involved in lobbying for destructive roads.

# Federal election: searching for transport priorities

**Less than a month after taking the reins from Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister Julia Gillard has called an election for 21 August. Opinion polls vary in their prediction of the likely victor, however all indicate a close contest.**

Climate change is a key election issue, with Tony Abbott ruling out a price on carbon, despite his treasury spokesman Joe Hockey describing a carbon price as “inevitable.” At the time of writing, rumours suggest that Labor is considering an interim carbon price but is still waiting for that “community consensus” we thought we had in the last election. Analysis by the Climate Institute shows that by 2020, emissions will rise 7% above 2000 levels under Coalition policies, whereas the ALP’s current lack of an announced policy would see emissions rise by 20%. The Greens’ policies would reduce emissions by 26%.

Ironically, many analysts blame uncertainty over carbon pricing for stalled investment in the electricity industry, which may lead to higher electricity

prices as demand overtakes supply. And although the Global Financial Crisis has sent oil prices back down to their 2007 levels, recent research warns that oil production will peak and start to fall soon after the end of the next term of government. Politicians concerned about the cost of living will need a renewed focus on car dependence.

We are hopeful that Infrastructure Australia (IA) maintains and strengthens its role as an advisor on infrastructure investment. In principle IA ensures that proposals are soundly based rather than driven by political pork-barrelling. Unfortunately the experience with the Regional Rail Link demonstrates that improvement is still needed.

Last year’s Senate transport committee endorsed making Federal transport funding “conditional on reforms to...create central coordinating agencies along the model of the Public Transport Authority of Western Australia.” Before throwing taxpayer dollars at poorly-justified mega-projects,

federal candidates would do well to ensure transport planning follows the successful public authority model of cities such as Zurich, Vancouver and Perth.

## **Let Them Eat Freeways**

Mr Brumby, it’s no longer a joke  
There are four million people in this big  
smoke  
And they can’t very well all drive around  
Or the car fumes will drive us under-  
ground  
They need public transport—and more  
of it too  
Like a train line to Doncaster, which  
stops at Kew  
And train carriages that aren’t such a  
squeeze  
They leave us little room to breathe  
If you want to win the election, might I  
suggest  
You cease putting people’s patience to  
the test?  
They’re already wondering why you  
have money to pour  
Into everything but what they’re begging  
you for

*Judith Loriente*

## **It’s past time to re-staff all stations**

**The PTUA has called on all political parties in the forthcoming State election to bring back full-time staffing of all metropolitan railway stations.**

For many years we have maintained that the train network should not be one of ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’, but recent episodes of violence around stations and on trains have brought a new focus on the need for a pervasive staff presence on the system.

‘Premium’ stations—with customer service staff from first to last train—should be the standard right across the network. This was the situation prior to the 1980s, when staff were gradually withdrawn to cut costs.

Currently only 38% of stations on the Metro network are ‘Premium’ status, with full-time customer service staff from first to last train. Even including

current government commitments, this will rise to just 48%, with a further 19% of ‘Host Stations’ being staffed during peak times only (hence not at the times when people tend to feel unsafe).

Gaps of 4 to 5 unstaffed stations in a row are common on the rail network. The biggest gap is on the Upfield line, where there are seven consecutive stations with no staff. These gaps will not change when currently committed upgrades have been completed.

Metro figures recently obtained by the *Herald Sun* indicate that of the 7,205 incidents reported at metropolitan railway stations in 2009, around 30% of those occurred at stations with no full-time staff presence. We believe it is likely many more incidents occurred at unstaffed stations, and have simply not been reported.

Between August 2009 and June 2010, there have also been 877 attacks on Myki machines, causing some \$3.2 million in damage, with the worst hit stations all lacking fulltime staff.

We believe that fully-staffed stations are preferable to the Coalition’s plan for Protective Service Officers after 6pm—mainly because staff can perform many functions besides helping people feel safe. Only genuine station staff can assist with customer service (including directions), and reduce fare evasion by helping with ticket machines and selling tickets.

Provided staff are properly backed up by security patrols and a fast emergency response from police and Authorised Officers when required, we believe full-time staff are the best solution for passengers.



# New Metro timetables: Punctuality improves, but it's far from perfect

**June's timetable shake-up on the Caulfield group of train lines does appear to have had a positive effect on punctuality, but has had some teething problems, and a mixed reaction from passengers.**

Metro CEO Andrew Lezala noted at his presentation to PTUA members on 1 July that there had been an improvement in just the first two weeks of operation, with Caulfield group AM peak punctuality jumping from 65.1% to 78.7%. Evening peak punctuality improved marginally from 56.5% to 57.9%, and the all-day figure improved from 68.9% to 73.2%, still well below the 88% target.

So while it's early days, it appears the

change has had some of the desired effect. Anecdotal evidence also suggests trains are less crowded, which is to be expected from the small number of additional services that have been provided.

There have been some problems. Some direct Frankston trains are not continuing through to Southern Cross as advertised. There is at least one case of a weekend Frankston train running express rather than stopping all stations as intended. Information to passengers about train stopping patterns has also been incorrect, or even nonexistent, on some occasions.

Feedback from users has been mixed. Passengers from beyond Cheltenham

who need to use Loop stations are obviously unhappy about having to catch stopping trains or change for the Loop. Other Frankston line users aren't pleased that more trains stop all stations to the city. In contrast, some Flinders Street users are very pleased with the new direct services.

Users on other lines have been less vocal, as changes have been less marked. We'll be watching for more detailed performance figures in due course, and we'll be talking to Metro about some of the problems.

But if punctuality continues to improve, this new two-tier simplified timetable may be the model for other lines.



## City Saver zone price hike, thanks to Myki

**At last the government has seen sense, and scrapped the requirement to touch-off Myki cards on trams.**

This was likely to have caused chaos when the card was fully implemented, with long delays particularly at CBD stops as large numbers of passengers queued to touch-off before alighting.

The good news is that zone 1 will now be valid on the the entire tram network. Sections of routes currently in zone 2 will become part of the zone 1+2 overlap. Users making trips in zone 2 only will still be able to touch-off to receive the cheaper zone 2 fare.

The bad news? The City Saver Zone is to be abolished, bumping those users up

to a zone 1 fare. For a 10 x Metcard or Myki Money user, this will mean the cost of a short trip within the CBD jumps from \$2.18 to \$2.94, or 34%.

Of course this makes a mockery of the claim that Victoria had to go to the expense and effort of building its own Smartcard ticketing system, rather than buying an established one from elsewhere, because—to quote a Transport Ticketing Authority statement from November 2009—“software must be designed to best meet our State's individual fare structure.”

It also leaves in tatters claims that Myki would save passengers money. While zone 1+2 tram users will save some

money with this change, we've had a number of inner-suburban and CBD residents contact the PTUA expressing their anger that their fares will jump.

It's not difficult to imagine a alternative solution, that would have retained the City Saver fare yet remained practical, given the vast majority of tram users travel in zone 1 (and in the CBD, are likely to have travelled into the CBD using a zone 1 or zone 1+2 fare). The Zone 1 fare could have been made the 'default' (no touch-off) fare—allowing most users to avoid having to touch off—but an optional touch-off and prior touch-on within the City Saver area could still have attracted the lower fare.

## Geelong Branch report

### What became of our 'guaranteed' \$80 million for Geelong and Bellarine buses?

We were dismayed at the revelation a few weeks ago, by the local office of the Department of Transport, that the full amount of funding needed to implement Stage 2 of the region's bus system upgrade (due to be introduced in October) has not been granted.

As a consequence, the improvements that were being planned will be considerably scaled back, but no-one is prepared to reveal to what extent.

Obviously, the much-vaunted "guaranteed" funding of \$80 million over 12 years for Geelong region bus system improvements, announced by the State government in its Victorian Transport Plan 18 months ago, is now being clawed back. We have been briefing local politicians and the media about the consequences of this broken promise. Kurt Reiter, the Liberal candidate for the state seat of Bellarine, is set to issue a media release on the issue.

### Meeting Opposition MPs

We have met Terry Mulder, transport shadow minister. Among other things, we tried to get him interested in the PTUA's policy of establishing a single public transport authority, but he disappointed us somewhat in that regard.

After being approached by us, Sarah Henderson, Liberal candidate for the marginal federal seat of Corangamite, attended our last Branch meeting. We were able to brief her on current PT issues in the region, particularly our concerns about the federally-funded Regional Rail Link (RRL). She asked to be sent some more information about it, and proposes to issue a media release highlighting the problems with the RRL and querying the lack of information.

### Regional Rail Link: questions remain

We have talked to a couple of the construction firms which might bid for work on the RRL. Announcements by the government earlier this month relating to the project shed very little light

on most of the key uncertainties, including the effect on travel time to Geelong and the interaction between Geelong and Tarneit train services. There are also widespread rumours that the estimated cost of the RRL has blown out considerably from the original \$4.3 billion figure, which would not be inconsistent with the financial performance of recent Victorian transport projects!

### Bus stops in jeopardy

We have opposed the removal of a couple of 'inconvenient' bus stops: one in King Street Queenscliff and the other outside the former Griffiths Bookshop in Ryrie Street. The former is scheduled to be removed at the behest of a developer who wants to "free up" five car parking spaces, and the latter is to allow al fresco dining on the pavement. We look like losing in Queenscliff and winning in Geelong.

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

## Melbourne bike share a fizzer?

**Melbourne's bike share scheme has launched, and the distinctive blue bikes are popping up at various locations around the CBD. But so far it's not clear that many people are using them.**

The *Melbourne Leader* on 12 July reported there had been 1350 rides, making about 30 rides per day since the scheme began on 31 May. That corresponds to each of the scheme's 100 bikes being used once every three days, on average.

The biggest barrier to usage is the requirement to bring your own helmet, and anecdotal evidence suggests that many users appear not to bother with

one. It's unclear if they are tourists unaware of Victoria's mandatory bike helmet laws, or locals willing to risk a fine.

PTUA members have also reported a reluctance by city businesses to take out corporate subscriptions for their staff, with some apparently receiving legal advice that the 'BYO helmet' requirement exposes corporate subscribers to Occupational Health and Safety liabilities.

It's never been obvious who the target market for the bike share scheme is. Most people arriving in the CBD have paid for all-day public transport travel, and are unlikely to find using a bike

quicker or easier than getting around the CBD by tram, particularly with the helmet requirement.

So while other cities (that don't have mandatory helmet laws) have seen bike sharing be a success, the jury is still out in Melbourne.



# Manningham Council tug-o-war on 48 tram extension

**One of the medium term priorities in the integrated transport strategy of the City of Manningham is the extension of the 48 tram service from its current terminus at Balwyn Road, Balwyn North, to Doncaster Hill.**

There is a strong case for the extension, which has been PTUA policy for at least two decades. Direct services from Manningham to the inner east, including Balwyn, Kew, Hawthorn and Richmond, are poor to non-existent. The 48 tram, by terminating just 3km short of a major travel destination, represents a large existing investment in infrastructure for relatively little benefit. Extending the service to Doncaster would boost utilisation of the service, particularly on the lightly-patronised section beyond Kew. Manningham's car-dependent postwar legacy is not sustainable, and significant population and commercial growth is projected for Doncaster Hill.

It was therefore most encouraging when Manningham threw its support behind a high level feasibility study. Unfortunately, the PTUA and other community groups were not consulted on the terms of reference. These were written by Council officers with a focus on narrow engineering and technical issues, and on point-to-point travel from Doncaster to the Melbourne CBD.

A more logical initial step would have been to analyse supply and demand for a service with the carrying capacity of the extended 48 route, without dwelling on vehicle technical characteristics (given that the technical task should not be in contention, being similar to that performed in other parts of the tram network). Such an analysis should have also considered the potential of the service to achieve mode shift from car to public transport within the

catchment area. The central focus of such a service would not be travel from Doncaster to the CBD: it should include all intermediate points.

The report by GHD raised several technical objections to the extension, many of them dubious. It raised concerns about trams operating in mixed traffic, despite this being the norm in much of the existing network. It also asserted that the gradient on Doncaster Road would be an operational problem, despite the fact that trams operate at similar gradients in Hawthorn and Burwood. The consultants also saw the complexities of installing DDA-compliant tram stops on Doncaster Hill as a significant constraint; yet again, tram services operate under similar constraints elsewhere on the network. The existence of steep hills is not yet an offence under equal-opportunity legislation.

Having received this apparent setback, the council sought a peer review (jointly funded with the City of Booroondara), and obtained three expressions of interest. These came from Prof Graeme Currie, chair of public transport at Monash University; Prof Nick Low, Director of the GAMUT centre at Melbourne University; and former RACV president and current ConnectEast director Dr Max Lay.

Of these three it would appear that Dr Lay should have been excluded on conflict-of-interest grounds, as a director of the PPP that materially benefits from higher car use and lower public transport use in the eastern suburbs. It appears, however, that the choice of reviewer was left to the same Council officers who wrote the unfavourable terms of reference for the GHD study. In any event, the council chose Dr Lay to conduct the review.

Manningham has not yet published the review, but according to media reports Dr Lay found the tram proposal to be “unrealistic” and “enormously expensive.” He was also quoted as saying the State Government “clearly” favoured bus solutions for Manningham and the council gained nothing by “perversely tugging in other directions.”

Manningham Council now finds itself in a delicate position with its campaign. It has received a technical report—bristling with wrong assumptions about the purpose of the extended service—that has laid a minefield of tendentious technical objections, followed by a peer review that rubber-stamps the consultancy report while pouring scorn on the original proposal.

Evidently, the campaign at Manningham has played out as what *Yes Prime Minister* called “a clash between the political will and the administrative won't.” To its credit, the council is sticking to its guns. At its 29 June meeting, it resolved to obtain a second opinion on the GHD report—this time “from a suitably credentialed expert in public transport”—and to commission a further study. It also resolved to lobby the State Government to conduct its own study into the extension.

The way this exercise has played out shows that even quite powerful advocates are still at a disadvantage when forced to defend worthwhile projects from their own resources, in an institutional environment that remains hostile to suburban rail improvements. It highlights once again the need for an effective public transport authority at State level, to rebuild a pro-public-transport culture that extends beyond CBD commuting, and to pursue public transport service improvements as a matter of course.

**Copy deadline for the next PTUA News is 27 August 2010.**

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

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## PTUA News

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### Inside. . .

Footscray homes lost for secret public transport business

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Geelong bus funding under threat

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