

Two years on: Go-slow on public transport, but foot to floor on motorways

27 November marked two years since the election of the Baillieu Government. What has become of their promises to fix public transport?

Our report card on the government's first two years has them earning a D for stalling on public transport upgrades whilst pushing expensive new roads.

The government made a point in its first months of ticking the boxes on key public transport election promises, starting feasibility studies on rail to Doncaster, Rowville and Melbourne Airport. But these look increasingly like half-hearted exercises, with the priority shifting to motorways—in particular the unwanted, unnecessary, enormously expensive east-west 'tunnel'.

Its most recent submission to Infrastructure Australia, which listed scores of road projects not flagged during the election campaign, underscored the policy backflip.

The Baillieu Government's cursory, secret reviews of the previous government's controversial Myki and Regional Rail Link projects were also disappointing. These two projects, for all their huge expense, will lock in ongoing inconvenience to passengers—Myki, by abolishing single-use tickets, and the rail link, by abolishing V/Line stops at North Melbourne.

One of the greatest disappointments is that Public Transport Victoria—the new planning authority supposed to fix ongoing rail problems and expand transport service coverage—has yet to reveal a clear agenda.

It appears that PTV is just a re-branded version of the failed old bureaucracy, rather than a re-skilled agency with a clear mandate to fix and extend public transport.

Initial high hopes for the authority were dashed by decisions to recruit 'in-house', rather than bringing in outside experts. It has since failed to demonstrate its independence from government, avoiding genuine, open community engagement on matters from timetable changes to new infrastructure. Auditing and public reporting on public transport assets and works programmes has not occurred.

The Baillieu Government has also gone missing-in-action on buses, with one route removed altogether, but no systematic programs to upgrade bus frequency on major routes or extend network coverage. The promise to build a station at Southland appears to have stalled.

Against all this, the government has made some worthy incremental improvements. It has funded 7 additional suburban trains by 2014, new V/Line carriages, ten new trams, improved weekend train frequencies, a handful of station upgrades and a new station at Grovedale. Passengers are also grateful for the presence of Protective Service Officers at some of the major stations where higher-profile security was sorely needed.

Overdue level crossing removals are proceeding at Mitcham and Springvale Roads. Given benefits for congestion, rail operations and safety, limited road funding is far better directed at more extensive level crossing eliminations than striking out on new motorways.

⇒ www.ptua.org.au/election2010

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Call or email the office (see above).

Commuter Club

PTUA members can obtain cheap yearly Myki Passes. See www.ptua.org.au/members/offers.

Internet

Our website is at 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.

Committee

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Tim Petersen—Secretary
Daniel Bowen
Matthew Ferrantino
Ian Hundley
Terry Konstandelis
Tim Long
Paul Prentice
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Malcolm Simister
Nalla Sivarasa
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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

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

AGM report

The PTUA's Annual General Meeting took place on 11 October.

The meeting was addressed by Melbourne transport planner John Stone, who described the findings of his recently-completed PhD project at the University of Melbourne. John's research focussed on the factors behind the success of social change campaigns in reviving public transport planning in Perth, Vancouver and various cities in Europe. (See John's article on page 5.)

John provided some views on possible future directions for the Association, emphasising the need for the PTUA to engage with a community-led grassroots campaign to bring about policy change. It is through this kind of action that communities elsewhere have overcome powerful vested interests.

Outgoing President Daniel Bowen and Secretary Tony Morton presented brief reports summarising the PTUA's activities over the year, with special emphasis on the ongoing failures of the train sys-

tem and the unfolding Myki troubles—likely to get worse with the abolition of short-term tickets.

Organisationally, the PTUA has continued setting new records for membership, thanks both to the increasing prominence of public transport as a burning political issue, and the large take-up of our Commuter Club offer in the face of steep fare increases by the government. Our regular bi-monthly members' meetings continued this year, with guest presenters that included Public Transport Ombudsman Janine Young, Public Transport Victoria chief Ian Dobbs, and the Bogota transport planner Felipe Carvajal.

A vote of thanks was given for the work of the PTUA's tireless volunteers, especially Peter Waters in the office and Margaret Pullar who has made substantial contributions to our office and the newsletter mailout. Thanks were also given to Daniel on his retirement as President (see next page), and a welcome to new committee members Paul Prentice, Nalla Sivarasa and Anthony Young.

Documents online for members

The PTUA's annual meeting documentation is now available on our website for easy access by PTUA members.

Documents available include the minutes of our AGMs back to 2005 and our annual financial statements back to 2009.

Members will require a password to access documents. This will be sent with the regular electronic news posting to members who have elected to receive PTUA emails. Other members can contact the office for the necessary details.

Members may also attend the office by appointment to view other documents or browse our research library.

The address for access to documents is ptua.org.au/members/docs. As always, please address any queries to the office, office@ptua.org.au or (03) 9650 7898.

Changing the guard at the PTUA

After nine years in the post, Daniel Bowen has decided to take a break from being PTUA President. Former Secretary Tony Morton has stepped up in his place.

Daniel first became active in the PTUA in 2000 as editor of *PTUA News*. He joined the committee in 2002 and took on the role of President at the end of 2003. This was followed soon after

by his ‘baptism of fire’ as news spread of the chaos at Flinders Street station on New Year’s Eve 2003—chaos that was brought to public attention for the first time thanks to PTUA volunteers. Trains and trams have run all night on New Year’s Eve every year since then, in an enduring victory for public transport users.

Tony joined the PTUA committee in

1996 and has been Secretary of the Association since the end of 2003. His PTUA career spans three State Governments and six Transport Ministers.

Daniel will continue on the PTUA committee in a supporting role. We thank him for his endeavours over so many years on behalf of Victoria’s public transport users.

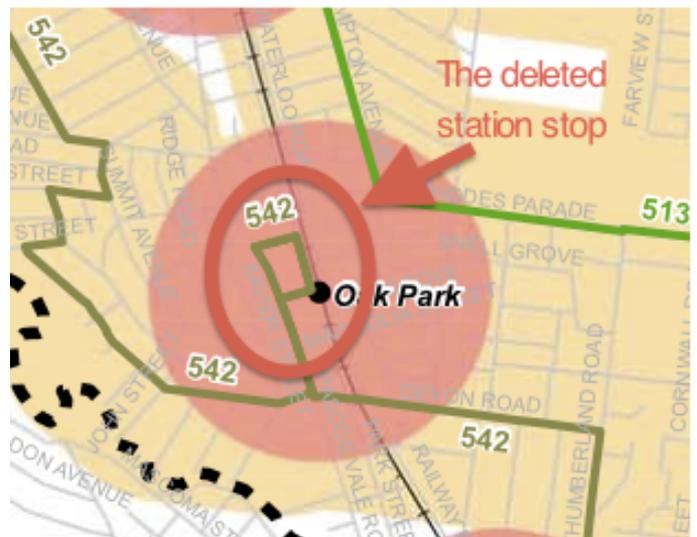
Disconnecting the buses

A recent timetable change in the City of Moreland has removed the only bus route serving Oak Park station and shopping centre.

Bus 542 is a local route serving a number of suburbs near the Craigieburn Line between Roxburgh Park and Oak Park. In early November, the route was extended from its former terminus at Oak Park railway station to serve a part of Pascoe Vale with no existing bus services. This was a recommendation from the 2008 Hume/Moreland bus review, supported by the PTUA.

Unfortunately, Public Transport Victoria has ignored one key aspect of the Bus Review recommendation, which was to retain the Oak Park station stop (see opposite). Instead, the route continues directly along the road to the south. There are no other bus routes serving Oak Park station.

Although this is essentially a local issue, it has disturbing implications. The important thing to keep in mind is that this is a local feeder service; it is not a cross-town route like the nearby 903 SmartBus for which directness is imperative. For those living in Oak Park, the basic need is for a bus route that connects to the nearest railway station, and—secondarily—



Source: Report of Hume Moreland Bus Review, 2008

to the nearest major shopping centre (which in this case is Glenroy, rather than Pascoe Vale).

The disturbing aspects of this decision are twofold: first, that a body charged with planning a multimodal network considers it a good idea to disconnect a local bus route from a railway station; and second, that this occurred despite community consultation favouring the opposite.

Flagstaff station needs to open seven days

Strong growth in the north-west of the CBD has led to renewed calls for Flagstaff station to open at weekends. Currently it is the only Melbourne railway station that is not open every day of the week.

While the nearby legal precinct is quiet on weekends, attractions such as the gardens and the nearby Victoria Market are busy, and there are increasing numbers of residential apartments in

the immediate area. The station also provides the only rail interchange to tram route 55.

We understand there are concerns that multiple staff members must be on-site to run the station when it is open, making opening the station expensive, but that there are opportunities to make infrastructure changes which might alleviate this, allowing fewer staff on duty at quiet times.

It is illogical to have a station in one of the densest, busiest parts of Melbourne that is closed on weekends. It’s high time Flagstaff was open every day of the week.

The Greens have a petition calling for the station to be opened on weekends. For more details: www.melbournecitygreens.com/flagstaff

The Myki changeover: What is this all for again?

By the end of December, the Metcard system will be no more.

Metcards will be sold for the last time on 28 December. Beyond then, metropolitan tickets will all be Myki, and no short term or single use ticket will be available.

This is already causing problems, as seen with the long queues at Southern Cross Station on Melbourne Cup Day. Big crowds used to cause queues with Metcard as well, but having to explain to new users (both tourists and locals) that they needed to buy a reusable smartcard and load money onto it exacerbated the delays.

Expect more problems from 29 December, as tram passengers find they have no way of buying a ticket on-board, and

bus drivers struggle to explain to people why they can only sell a Myki card.

Is it that unfair to ask again why we went to all this trouble? Ticketing systems are supposed to make paying fares easy and evading fares difficult. But abolishing of single use tickets creates new barriers to travel:

- **Confusion.** For months we will have visitors relying on out-of-date information, and not realising they can't buy a single-use ticket until they're on board.
- **Cost.** The card cost of \$6 for full fares and \$3 for concession fares is an impost enough for one person making a single trip. But a family with 2 adults and 2 children visiting Melbourne has to

spend \$18 on cards before they even start paying fares.

- **Availability.** Vending machines only sell full fare Myki cards: concession travellers have to find a premium station or retail outlet. And on trams, you won't be able to even top up your balance: you'll have to ensure your fare is loaded before you get on board.
- **Psychology.** Visitors don't all want to have a Myki card as a souvenir of Melbourne—and even if they do, won't always find them easy to obtain. Meanwhile, plenty of people will use “I'd have to buy a Myki” as a reason to stick to driving the car.

Petition launched for single-use tickets

The PTUA has launched an online petition calling on the State Government to make single-use tickets available to occasional users and tourists, and stop compulsory Myki purchase becoming a barrier to public transport use.

The petition at www.mykisingles.com calls for single-use 2-hour and daily tickets to be made available throughout Victoria at stations and on trams and buses, and for Myki top-ups to be allowed on trams.

Victoria will become probably the only place in the world that does not provide single-use tickets for occasional users

and tourists. If a Myki card fails, users will be forced to buy a second Myki to cover interim travel.

If the State Government wants to avert ticketing disaster it could follow the lead of Smartcard systems in Perth or Brisbane, which were cheaper to install than Myki, but still provide simple, machine-printed paper tickets for occasional users.

Single-use tickets could be printed as paper receipts by existing Myki hardware at railway stations and on buses. On trams, however, it would require the reintroduction of conductors (paid for in large part by a reduction in fare

evasion), or the revival of the scrapped plans for tram ticket machines.

This would not be without cost, but passengers shouldn't have to pay for Myki's failures through years of on-going cost and inconvenience. In any case, no-one can verify the purported savings from scrapping the original plans for single-use tickets, not least because the government has refused to release the Deloitte report on Myki.

This issue will continue to haunt the Baillieu Government if it does not heed the message from the travelling public that an alternative is needed to compulsory Myki ownership.

Get set for another fare rise

We anticipate the government will announce another ‘CPI plus 5%’ fare rise in December, matching the hike in December last year.

As of going to press, no announcement has been forthcoming from the government. However, it is clear that last year's above-inflation fare hike was only the first of two, factored in by the

Brumby Government to help pay for its 2008 *Victorian Transport Plan*.

The Baillieu Government scrapped the *Transport Plan*, but kept the 2011–12 fare rise. There is every expectation it will keep the 2012–13 increase too.

Coming on top of the abolition of turn-up-and-pay tickets, this would be more

bad news for passengers from a government that promised to improve things.

As always, PTUA members can take advantage of discounted yearly Mykis through our Commuter Club offer (but note the 2013 fares will apply from mid-December): www.ptua.org.au/members/offers

Why is change in Melbourne so hard?

Transport planner John Stone has inquired into what factors are holding back Melbourne's transport. Here is a summary in his own words.

In 2003, after more than a decade working in community organisations trying to change Melbourne's public transport system, I wanted to understand why change in Melbourne was so difficult, and why other cities did better.

At that time, Melbourne's public transport patronage had been stagnant for more than 20 years. We knew that this poor performance was not due to the shape of the city or because people did not know about alternatives. Public transport performance was showing much better trends in Vancouver and Perth. So what was different about transport politics in those cities?

Incumbency means power, and, in Melbourne, road-builders had control of the planning agenda from the 1960s. Hard as it is to imagine today, there was a huge backlash from ordinary people against the 1969 Transport Plan with

its huge grid of freeways. This backlash won some concessions but it didn't oust the government, nor did it force a change in the personnel responsible for planning and transport policy.

In Vancouver, big freeway protests did lead to new political representation and, in turn, to the firing of senior planners. New people were hired, and they wanted to see the city shaped by public transport not big roads. They used real consultation with citizens to demonstrate and build public and political support for new directions.

In Melbourne, another opportunity for change came in 1980 when road-builders proposed cuts to trams and trains across the city. Again, there was huge opposition and the Cain Government came to power in 1982, promising public transport improvements. But the new Minister secretly supported freeway building and his reorganised bureaucracy put roads people in most of the vital jobs. The old problems of competition between trams and trains and

buses were never addressed. And, campaigners for new ways of organising public transport were out in the cold.

In Perth, community campaigners mobilised opposition to closing the Fremantle line across the city in 1979. A change of government in 1983 did lead to positive changes: the Minister backed new rail investment in Cabinet; bureaucrats skilfully re-modelled the public transport agency; and the campaigners successfully combined back-room lobbying with public events.

In short, change had three stages. Mass opposition led to the election of new political entrepreneurs who, with active support inside and outside, re-shaped the agencies responsible for transport policy and public transport operations.

This is a brief summary of John's recently completed PhD work. You can read more here: <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.3/36049> (the full thesis), or <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.3/213832> (a shorter article on Melbourne and Perth).

Train woes: Too many preventable failures plague the system

Train passengers have been plagued in recent months by persistent failures on parts of the metropolitan and regional network. Regular signalling faults on the line between Newport and Laverton—which seem to occur almost entirely in peak hour—have led to massive difficulties for Werribee and Geelong passengers alike.

It is no help that Metro and V/Line tend to blame each other while the Department looks on, and they test credulity by claiming that each breakdown is due to an idiosyncratic problem rather than indicating a systematic malfunction.

One cable failure south of Little River a few months ago brought afternoon peak trains to a halt, with passengers on one being trapped for over four hours. It turned out to be a mistake made by Regional Fast Rail contractors in 2005,

when they buried an optical fibre cable too close to the old signalling cable, to be eventually punctured by a rock.

Following the gauge-conversion of the line from Seymour to Albury by the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) in 2009, its condition has become so bad that only 11% of Albury trains ran on time in October! Many trains are once again being replaced by buses. V/Line has had to do almost four times as much maintenance on the locomotives and carriages on that line as it has to do on those plying other routes.

Locating the cause of this fiasco has seen blame shifting and buck passing aplenty. The old broad gauge line was in poor condition before conversion, and there was a lot of rain around the start of the year, but even the existing standard gauge line has been affected by

mud holes resulting from bad drainage and insufficient maintenance.

Recently, the Gippsland line near Morwell was closed for three weeks after subsidence caused by the collapse of a large culvert—discovered only when a train hit the dip at over 100 km/h. The metal culvert had rusted out from both the outside and the inside, yet V/Line says its staff couldn't detect either. That is not at all reassuring, and a serious accident was avoided purely by luck.

Federal and State Governments must get a lot more serious about funding track maintenance organisations (ARTC and V/Line) to maintain tracks and other infrastructure to the higher standards required by heavier trains and higher-speed running. Procedures must be reviewed to ensure they are adequate and well-timed.

Geelong Branch report

G21 strategy cash

Although unofficially revealed about three months ago, it has finally been announced that State Government funding of \$100,000 has been made available for the next G21 Regional Public Transport Strategy.

The process has been extremely drawn out. The strategy, or rather plan-for-a-plan, was originally presented to Labor transport minister Martin Pakula. The money will no doubt pay for a consultant's report. We want to ensure that there is a more genuinely consultative process in the preparation of the report than the one which was run by G21 and GHD consultants in preparing the previous report eight years ago.

Mayor meets Branch

It was very positive that, well before the council election, successful Geelong mayoral candidate Keith Fagg asked to

meet our Branch Convenor Paul Westcott to talk about public transport and local government's role in it.

The problems with our local bus services were highlighted, along with possible improvements, in particular our 'Smartbus' proposal for the north-south corridor and for a linking east-west route to the Newcomb and Whittington area. The lack of consistent and persistent lobbying by the council for public transport improvements (as distinct from roads) was emphasised.

Radio Q&A with Minister

Paul Westcott was recently given time by the local community radio station morning show host, Dennis Scanlan, to question Terry Mulder directly for about 20 minutes. We thank Dennis for the opportunity and acknowledge the minister's preparedness to be involved.

Relating to the fate of short-term tickets under Myki, when asked if the Deloitte

report into Myki had been released, the minister said he didn't know. In fact, of course, the government has refused to make the report public, and MLC Greg Barber has launched a Supreme Court action in an effort to have it released.

It was significant that the Minister admitted that the \$1.5 million which the Labor government had said was available for upgrading North Shore station had indeed existed, but that the Coalition decided that it should be spent on more 'important' priorities. (Meaning perhaps the New Street level crossing in Louise Asher's electorate?)

For the last year or more local Coalition parliamentarians have told us that the money had never been budgeted for, and we couldn't dispute that; now we can.

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

Safer transport options key to road safety

The Victorian Government is revising its Road Safety Strategy. Our submission to the strategy argues road trauma is best dealt with by enabling mode shift to public transport and rail freight, which have vastly superior safety records.

Despite the rare incidents on public transport that generate sensational media coverage, you are over five times more likely to die in a car than on public transport, and over 10 times more likely to be seriously injured on the road than on a train. Getting people out of their cars and onto public transport saves lives, reduces life-long injuries and has numerous other benefits like cutting congestion, emissions and fuel bills.

Yet PTUA studies have shown public transport services must be im-

proved significantly—particularly in outer suburbs—to offer a genuine alternative to driving. Government advertising implores people not to drive if they're tired or tipsy, yet its transport policy is leaving people few options.

Our submission also demands measures to boost the safety of vulnerable road users, including tram passengers. Cameras should be placed on trams, as is done in other cities, to catch motorists who risk passengers' lives by failing to stop. Dozens of people have been seriously injured getting on and off tram in recent years, and our members often report near misses.

Other measures proposed in our submission include:

- setting speed limits that minimise the likelihood of death or

serious injuries to pedestrians;

- ensuring local streets cater for an aging population and people with disabilities; and
- standardising Victoria's broad gauge rail network to encourage more freight onto rail.

Sweden and the Netherlands have road deaths per capita around half Australia's due in no small part to genuine alternatives to driving and traffic laws that rank people above motor vehicles. This is the direction Victoria's road safety strategy must take if the government is serious about saving lives and cutting the 'hidden toll' of serious injuries.

⇒ ptua.org.au/publications/papers-and-submissions

Letters to the Editor

Seniors stymied by Myki on Peninsula

As a southern Peninsula resident, I am concerned about the increase in the Seniors Daily fare to Melbourne from \$3.80 to \$9.02 under the Myki system.

It is apparently not possible to match the current Metcard fare because Myki is only able to issue a \$3.60 fare for zones 1 and 2, and Melbourne to the southern Peninsula also encompasses zones 3 and 4. This steep rise of 150% is clearly disadvantageous to those of senior years, who no longer drive, but need to keep medical and other appointments in Melbourne. Should senior residents wish to access only zones 3 and 4, then the Myki cost is \$5.42, which is still excessive in comparison with current arrangements.

It is not just seniors who are affected, but also the non-driving concession card holders who form the majority of the customer base for the 788 bus service (Portsea-Frankston).

Apart from the steep fare increase that Peninsula residents must now face, they

also suffer the infrequency of a 45 minute week day service with 75 minutes on weekends. In the peak summer period, timetabling becomes notional owing to overcrowding from holiday makers, many of whom reside in the beach caravan parks. Luggage, pushers and beach gear compound the difficulty of passenger movement.

The withdrawal of funding for many school buses would increase student numbers on Peninsula passenger services from 2013, as there are few alternative transport options.

Infrequency and overcrowding are ongoing issues, but the 150% fare increase for Seniors card holders merits an immediate official explanation.

DNG, Sorrento

[Ed—the school bus decision has been (partly) reversed; unfortunately this doesn't solve the larger problem with seniors' travel raised by DNG.]

Trains don't connect to trains

Metro's total contempt towards its passengers (customers) continues. In the evenings, trains from the city run alternatively to Belgrave and Lilydale.

These trains are met by a connecting train at Ringwood.

Last night (Thursday 15 October) the 10.24pm Belgrave train was 3 minutes late, arriving at Ringwood at 10.27pm. The connecting Lilydale train, scheduled to depart at 10.26pm, had gone. Passengers were advised that the next Lilydale train would depart at 11.24pm. Understandably, passengers were incensed.

Later at 11.26pm as per time table the connecting Belgrave train departed with only 3 passengers. At 11.33pm (9 minutes late) the Lilydale train arrived with more than 20 Belgrave passengers similarly furious that their connecting train had left without them. Now it was their turn to wait in the cold for about half an hour for the next Belgrave train.

Late connecting trains on reaching their destinations, Belgrave and Lilydale, do not return immediately so they could depart from Ringwood late and still depart on time for the return journey.

One can only conclude that Metro does not give a damn about its passengers.

Andrew Blair, Healesville

In brief. . .

Free transport again for Christmas, NYE

The State Government has confirmed its usual arrangements for free public transport across Victoria on Christmas Day and after 6pm on New Year's Eve. Melbourne trains and trams will generally run all night on New Year's Eve, but as usual, some quieter routes are excluded. Specifically, trams 24, 30, 79, 82 and City Circle will not run overnight.

Christmas Day services will mostly run to a Sunday timetable, but normal weekday start and finish times will apply for trams.

No summer night trains: but a handful more NightRiders

The government has passed on providing additional late-night train services in the lead-up to Christmas, to cater for large crowds in the city.

Instead, extra NightRider bus services are being provided on four routes: Lilydale, Belgrave, Dandenong and Frankston. These routes will operate every 15 minutes (instead of 30) between 2am and 3:30am on weekends up to 23 December.

Large weekend crowds in the lead-up to Christmas 2011 highlighted the need for the government to provide additional train services after midnight to cope with demand. Passengers who

expected serious action this year may understandably be disappointed.

PTV trips up in Ballarat

It seems that when the Ballarat train timetable was changed in mid-November, no-one thought to alert the town bus planners at PTV.

The morning bus from Buninyong arrives at 6:55am, which used to connect to a 7:03am train departure. That train now leaves 17 minutes earlier, so bus passengers miss it and have to wait 41 minutes for the next train.

PTV told the *Ballarat Courier* it is "improving the connection as soon as possible." But it should never have been severed in the first place.

Copy deadline for the next PTUA News is 8 February 2013.

Newsletter contributors: Tony Morton, Daniel Bowen, Paul Westcott and Tim Petersen.

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Season's Greetings to all our members

Inside. . .

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If you are reading a friend's newsletter and would like to join and help the fight for better public transport, it's \$30 per year (\$15 concession). Call the office or see www.ptua.org.au/join.

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