



Federal coalition lurches into government on an anti-public transport platform

The new federal Coalition government led by Tony Abbott has appointed Warren Truss, the deputy prime minister and 23 year veteran National Party parliamentarian and member for Wide Bay in southern Queensland, as Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development.

Truss has ministerial responsibility for the incoming Abbott government's capital funding decisions on transport. During the recent election campaign the Liberal National Party announced a withdrawal of federal funding commitments from five rail projects made by the outgoing Labor government for the period 2013-17, including \$100 million from the Melbourne metro rail project. This followed Abbott's declaration that "We have no history of funding urban rail and I think it is important that we stick to our knitting. And the Commonwealth's knitting when it comes to funding infrastructure is roads."

Abbott is seemingly oblivious to the fact that the Commonwealth is currently providing about two-thirds of the funding for the \$4.8 billion Regional Rail Link in Victoria and jointly funding urban rail projects interstate, including the Gold Coast Rapid Transit in Queensland and the Gawler line modernisation project in South Australia.

Having elbowed aside important rail projects, the new government has also foreshadowed spending of \$11.5 billion for road projects, including \$1.5 billion for the proposed east-west road link in Melbourne. Seemingly the only significant exception to the Abbott government's infatuation with road projects is an accelerated \$180 million funding commitment for the Melbourne-Brisbane inland freight rail link.

Things may seem grim with the Prime Minister's ingrained prejudice against urban public transport projects and a National Party deputy inclined to see the federal budget as a milch cow for rural roads to

the virtual exclusion of all else. However, we know that the electorate at large consistently supports of greater government commitment to public transport. This high level of public sympathy for public transport extends beyond the capital cities. The election manifesto of the new independent member for Indi in Victoria's north-east, Cathy McGowan, highlighted such priorities. McGowan campaigned for an upgrade of the sub-standard Melbourne-Wodonga rail line, improved local public transport in the electorate, the high speed rail project, and local access to the rail freight route currently under development between Melbourne and Brisbane.

The former West Australian minister for planning and infrastructure, Alannah McTiernan, was also elected to the federal parliament. Her tenure as a minister in WA saw the construction of the 70 kilometre long Mandurah rail line south of Perth and the extension of the Joondalup line to the north of Perth.

The newly elected Greens senator for Victoria, Janet Rice, should improve the level of debate in the federal parliament on transport issues. A former mayor of the City of Maribyrnong and Chair of the Metropolitan Transport Forum, and former strategic transport planner, Janet Rice has been an effective campaigner for sustainable transport in Victoria.

The former parliamentary leader of the federal Liberal Party said in 2006 that "we have to reduce our dependency on the private automobile and the way to do that, the only way to do that, is to make public transport more available, more reliable and as a consequence more attractive."

Those comments were largely directed at the flagging metropolitan transport strategy of the then-premier of NSW, Maurice Iemma. Today, they could with equal merit be directed at Tony Abbott and Denis Napthine.

Keeping in touch...

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Membership Enquiries

Call or e-mail the office (see above)

PTUA members can obtain cheap yearly Myki passes – see www.ptua.org.au/members/offers

Internet

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

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

www.ptua.org.au/members/resources

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Member meetings

Melbourne:

See below for details of upcoming meetings

Eastern Suburbs:

Fourth 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

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Public Transport Users Association will be held at 6:30pm on Thursday 14th November 2013, in the Hayden Raysmith Room, 4th Floor, Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne.

Nominations for committee must be received in writing by the returning officer no later than Thursday 7th November 2013. Please find enclosed a nomination form, and return by mail or in person to our office if you wish to nominate. Nominations will only be accepted from the floor at the meeting if insufficient nominations are received to fill required positions.

There will be a presentation by Chris Hale from the Engineering faculty of The University of Melbourne on Moving Block Signaling, which if applied to Melbourne’s train system would allow an immediate increase in capacity at a fraction of the cost of the East West road link or the Metro tunnel.

A reminder that you must be a current financial member to attend and vote at the AGM. You may renew your membership at the meeting if it is still current or no more than four months lapsed.

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Need grows for good feeder bus services

Train patronage continues to grow, with Public Transport Victoria's annual report showing a 2% rise in the past year.

But with bus patronage dropping by 5.7%, serious questions must once again be asked of the adequacy of feeder bus services into stations. This is most apparent at some outer-suburban stations, where over-full car parks are a regular occurrence. As shown in these photos from South Morang provided by a PTUA member, some passengers resort to illegally parking.

In Melbourne's middle and outer suburbs, most bus services run only every 30 to 40 minutes, including in peak hour, and often follow roundabout routes. The last thing people want on the way to or from work is a long wait for a bus

which then gives them a comprehensive tour of their local suburb.



While more frequent, more direct Smartbus services have been introduced to a lucky few areas -

and are very successful - in many areas buses are simply too infrequent to be competitive with driving to the station, even when parking is a known problem.

The key is for the government to fund more "tram-like" frequent bus services, direct along main roads, with traffic priority where it is needed.

Around zone boundaries, reforms should also be made to ensure that passengers don't pay an additional fare for catching the bus to the station.

The experience from trams and the few frequent buses in Melbourne show that people will use feeder services to reach the station - the key is providing more suburbs with these kinds of useable services.

Myki: leading to more fare evasion?

Myki took over V/Line passes for commuter belt services from Monday 23rd September, with paper tickets still available for single or daily (return) tickets. V/Line announced that from that date, fare gates at Southern Cross would be closed, meaning passengers on paper tickets would need to be let through by a staff member.

Meanwhile, PTV's annual report for 2012-13 revealed that fare evasion jumped from 9.4% in October 2012 to 11.9% in May 2013, the period when Metcard sales ceased in Melbourne and Myki became the only option.

The removal of Metcard of course resulted in no tickets being available on trams, and no short

term/single use tickets being available at all. Apart from the obvious frustration this causes, it would not surprise us one jot if this has led to higher rates of fare evasion. On trams, PTV says this has risen from 10.5% to 11.9%.

Buses saw a huge rise in fare evasion, from 9.1% to 16%. It is notable that while Metcard validators were located next to bus drivers, Myki readers are in a position where it is often difficult for drivers to see if people boarding have touched-on.

Rumours abound of fare evaders not just blocking the view of the readers for drivers, but also in some cases programming their mobile phones to make the "beep" sound. Other passengers may

board and ignore errors when the reader declines the Myki due to an inadequate balance or other problems. This is similar to the past problems of some passengers ignoring expiry issues with Metcards, particularly when staff were not present to explain why the validator had beeped in error.

We understand some bus operators are looking at whether they can de-activate the reader and use the driver console for touch-on. While bus drivers may be understandably reluctant to act as ticket inspectors due to personal safety issues, simply ensuring they are able to see whether passengers are paying their fare or not is clearly the first step in stemming the growth in fare evasion levels.

Winning the Battle for Public Transport in Melbourne against "Automobility"

The University of Melbourne's Nicholas Low addressed a packed members meeting at Ross House on 22 August on the subject of path dependence and transformational change in urban transport. Nicholas Low is a professor in urban and environmental planning at the University of Melbourne who, in association with colleagues, has made an extensive study of these issues in Melbourne and in other large cities.

Professor Low explained how for many years Melbourne has permitted itself to be locked into a pattern of path dependence of "automobility" in Melbourne at the expense of public transport and active transport. For the good of the residents and the city this paradigm needs to be broken now.

Elements of path dependence

There are two elements of path dependence - technical and organisational. Technical path dependence relates to the existing 'hardware' of city infrastructure. Institutional path dependence is the 'software', which includes the existing transport agencies and networks as well as a discursive element, which is the dominant interpretations and stories about how transport in the city works. These play an important role in justifying official decision-making.

The major incremental investments in city transport infrastructure during the last fifty years have catered overwhelmingly for increased car use, to the virtual exclusion of public transport. This has created a strong, although not unanimous, public view that the

only transport issue is road congestion and that the major remedy in a growing city is the provision of ever more road space.

The key public agencies, including the Department of Transport, VicRoads, Linking Melbourne Authority, and central agencies including the Department of Treasury and Finance facilitate this trend. Non-government bodies, especially the well-resourced RACV, aid and abet the continuance of these historical trends.

East west link a fork in the road

However, path dependence is not inevitable, and critical events can lead to a "fork in the road," Professor Low explained. Activists must take full advantage of these opportunities.

The dominant story line does change when it is demonstrated to no longer fit the facts. For instance, the idea that additional road space for the private motor car must be provided on a 'predict and provide' basis is almost dead. Thus the line from the dominant institutions has changed to 'We must have motorways to improve freight productivity.' This is often equally self-serving, and when it is it must be exposed as such.

The Victorian government's so-called "east-west link" may well be a decisive fork in the road, because external circumstances are increasingly throwing the project into question. It is in such circumstances that campaigning groups like the PTUA are well suited to seize the initiative.

The increasing public opposition to the east west link provides an opportunity to build a powerful advocacy coalition. Elements of this coalition include affected, fearful and angry resident groups, the PTUA and other public transport advocacy organisations, inner and outer urban local government agencies, and social welfare, health and education groups who are greatly concerned about the opportunity costs for social services that this expensive project represents. The campaign needs to appeal to and provide ammunition for political oppositions, and to seek political champions.

Expose the existing conventional wisdom

It is vital that an *immanent critique* of the existing conventional wisdom should be made, together with a coherent and well-articulated alternative paradigm. An immanent critique is one in which politically effective individual actors address the central arguments of their opponents. Professor Low said that it is important that campaigners identify automobility story lines as they evolve, subject them to scrutiny and bring evidence to bear to demolish the core arguments.

Campaigners should be ready to mobilise networks of people with the capacity to exert influence on policy. It is important to enlist authoritative institutions which stand outside and above the existing bureaucratic apparatus which by its nature resists change. (Continued p7)

Lobby your local Councillors NOW

Have you ever been to a meeting of your local Council, or called your local Councillors and talked to them about public transport? Please make this a high priority in the coming months, and encourage others to join you.

Councils are in regular discussions with transport operators, PTV and VicRoads, colleagues on other Councils and key bureaucrats. State and Federal MPs routinely consult local Councillors of their political persuasion when considering how potentially controversial issues might play out, because most Councillors know pretty well what's going on in their communities. If Councillors across Victoria are telling MPs that constituents are concerned about the cost of the East-West Toll Road, and saying it would mean none of their own local transport priorities would receive funding, this will really assist the campaign against it.

Whether the state government signs the East-West contracts before the next election will be critical for the future of transport in Melbourne, so please think about your Council's stance on this issue, and how you might get them to pass a motion in favour of public transport investment and against spending the entire transport budget on an inner-city motorway that will just move an ever-worsening traffic jam a few kilometres west. If you need some ideas and inspiration, see <http://trainsnottollroads.com.au/news-media-events/videos>

Many Councillors and Mayors are happy to schedule a face-to-face meeting, especially if there are a few of you, you're from their Ward and you're polite and specific about what you want. If they won't, just ask a question in Public Question Time at a Council meeting. Councillors need to understand that as well as being better environmentally, socially and economically, better public

transport is the only way to relieve congestion, since the speed of public transport and traffic in cities are intrinsically linked. All Melbourne's existing motorways were going to be the solution to congestion, but at peak hour they fill up with cars and grind to a halt.

The Liberals are now insisting "this tollway *will* go ahead", in the hope that people will accept it's a *fait accompli* and not campaign against it. That's what they said about the Franklin dam.

Convincing Councils to oppose the motorway and actively campaign for better public transport – as a number of inner-city Councils now are – is a key part of what I think is a very winnable campaign. Please get this going in your area by lobbying your local Councillors, and feel free to ring me on 0402 075 306 if you want to discuss first.

Alison Clarke was a Melba Ward Councillor at the City of Yarra 2008-2012), and the 2011 Mayor.

Geelong branch report

The post-night-football bus service trial announced only four days before the first night game at Kardinia Park has ended even more suddenly and with even less publicity. Over 100 people used the services after the first game, with somewhat fewer passengers after the second. Then PTV pulled the plug, with no services after the third game. No official announcement was made and no reason given, however the bus companies said PTV cited lack of patronage. We think that, given the generally poor patronage of the

local bus system, patronage of the post-football buses was quite good. We have no idea what criteria PTV used to judge the success or otherwise of the trial, but it seemed to be based on the very different circumstances in Melbourne. So now we are back with the absurd position that people can catch a bus to the night football, but cannot get one home.

We understand that only a few weeks after it was introduced on V/Line commuter services, over 70 percent of Geelong line passengers

are using Myki. Few problems have been reported to us, although some card readers have been in place so long that the screens have become clouded and scratched by vandals. Finally, passengers now have a 15-minute grace period to touch on before the end of the evening peak and still obtain an off-peak fare. It was almost impossible for people catching the 18:01 Seymour train to touch on after 18:00 and still get to the train! Why that problem wasn't identified during the seven years of Myki's gestation, who knows?

THE FATE OF THE 901 SMARTBUS AND THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT'S TRANSPORT DISASTER AT MELBOURNE AIRPORT

There are currently about 120,000 road vehicle movements in the Melbourne Airport precinct each day, associated with nearly 80,000 airline passenger movements and direct airport employment of 14,300. Public transport is in such lamentable shape that ninety-five per cent of these employees drive to work, and only one in seventy takes public transport. The airport has 25,000 car parking spaces, with more to come, and there are many other car parking operators nearby. Less than 12% of existing passengers travel to and from the airport by bus and nearly two-thirds travel by private motor car. Most of the bus travel is by SkyBus. The contribution made by the 901 SmartBus and other route bus services run by Public Transport Victoria is insignificant.

It was with great fanfare in 2010 that the Brumby government launched the extension of the 901 SmartBus service to Melbourne Airport. An oversized sign adorned the middle and upper decks of the short-term car park at the time imploring people to "Get to the airport the Smart way (It's part of the plan)."

On the face of it the SmartBus 901 service should be a very useful addition to Melbourne Airport which is crying out for public transport. It is a relatively high frequency service, running every 15 minutes during the day on weekdays, and connecting with the rail network at Broadmeadows station, about 30 minutes from

Southern Cross station and with major public transport connections en-route. But things have not worked out that way and very few people use the 901 service to the airport.



A long walk

For one thing, its access to the airport was severely limited at the outset. It was permitted to set down and pick up passengers at only one location - well south of Terminal 4 (Tiger Airways). For passengers destined for Terminal 1 (Qantas Domestic) it involved a walk of the best part of three quarters of a kilometre, much of it in the open and no shelter was provided for those waiting for the bus. You just stood by the side of the road.

In June 2013, the 901 bus terminal was finally relocated to outside Terminal 1. Terminals for the very low frequency 478 (Moonee Ponds), 479 (Sunbury) and 500 (Broadmeadows to Sunbury) route

bus services are also located with the 901 stop. This had the advantage of reducing walking time for more airport users. However, it provides little solace for Terminal 4 users who now must engage on the lengthy walk previously endured by Terminal 1 users. This limit on effectiveness will only be resolved by the establishment of multiple bus stops at Melbourne Airport.

The initial poor location of the stop shows how much the Victorian government had abandoned public transport at Melbourne Airport to the tender mercies of the commercial interests that dominate the precinct at the expense of airport users. Of particular concern is that these include road transport interests, with Melbourne Airport having been reported to generate over 20% of its revenue and 75% of its profit from car parking fees.

Another major impediment to the effectiveness of the service is the extraordinarily lengthy scheduled travel time on the 901 SmartBus between the airport and Broadmeadows station. At 20 minutes it is unnecessarily lengthy and appears to be a function of the unnecessary slack that Public Transport Victoria has permitted the bus service operator to build into schedules. It should be no more than twelve to fifteen minutes.

Further, as is the case with much of Melbourne's public transport network, the 901 SmartBus is poorly co-ordinated with rail (continued p7)

THE FATE OF THE 901 SMARTBUS

(continued from p6)

services at Broadmeadows station for much of the day. As the 901 service has a fifteen minute service frequency whilst the Craigieburn trains run at 20 minute intervals transfer times for passengers are unpredictable and unnecessarily lengthy.

The service has never been promoted effectively on the PTV webpage or elsewhere. For all its manifest operating flaws, the 901 SmartBus remains highly price competitive with SkyBus and taxi services, however despite the banner headlines when it was launched, hardly anyone knows about it.

On the future at Melbourne Airport

According to the preliminary Draft Master Plan for Melbourne Airport, released in May 2013, airline passenger movements are predicted to increase to nearly 180,000 within 20 years, an

increase of about 120%, with direct employment to increase to 23,000. Based upon existing mode share, Melbourne Airport is forecasting vehicle road trips in the airport precinct to increase to 225,000 by 2033, an increase of nearly 90%.

According to the Draft Master Plan "Melbourne Airport is aware that its transport infrastructure has to be integrated into existing State and local transport networks" and that it views a rail service to be critical for the airport and "continues to advocate for a dedicated rail link."

Mulder: Rabbit in the spotlight

During the last three years the State government has behaved as if nothing needs to be done for public transport at Melbourne Airport. They appear to be impervious to predictions that in twenty years Melbourne Airport may have as many passenger movements as London Heathrow has now.

Minister Mulder is with every passing day looking like the rabbit caught in the spotlight. He received a study report on a rail service to Melbourne Airport, but then declared erroneously that no rail service could be built in the absence of the proposed Metro rail tunnel. The Victorian government has now sidelined significant infrastructure spending on public transport in favour of the east-west road tunnel, predicted to cost \$8-12 billion. If it was ever built it would load even more traffic on the Tullamarine Freeway, Melbourne Airport and the northern suburbs generally.

And they are failing with the small, albeit important, things, too. The 901 Smartbus has been departing its terminal at Melbourne Airport 71 times every weekday for nearly four years now, often near empty. That's several thousand empty seats per day leaving an airport precinct which is super-saturated with cars.

Winning the Battle for Public Transport in Melbourne against "Automobility"

(continued from p4)

These may be public inquiries, ombudsman agencies, or standing committees like SACTRA in the UK. If they do not exist, actors for change should lobby for their creation.

Campaigning for an alternative

It is important to make arguments in support of public transport open and transparent and to continually demand transparency of the conventional arguments. Note in this regard that the Napthine government's east-west link

proposal remains a secret. Use open source modelling to counter conventional four step models.

The work of the late Paul Mees and others which show that networked transport can deliver high quality public transport, even in a dispersed suburban environment like Melbourne's, should be enlisted, Professor Low said.

The adverse effects of freeway expansion such as the proposed east-west link in creating 'induced traffic' should also be highlighted.

The well established critique of fractured institutions and rail operational failures should be accompanied by sustained attacks on the poorly organised network of bus services in Melbourne.

It is important to promote the idea of 'sustainable transport' to create a new paradigm of transport and mobility for this century. Professor Low concluded that this vision should be promoted as widely as possible amongst political and professional actors, especially those with power and influence.

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

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I, _____ of _____

nominate _____ of _____

for election to the position of: President Secretary Treasurer Committee member

Signed: _____ (nominator) _____ (candidate) ____/____/____ (date)