

## 2013, the year that was—from the President

**It has been a watershed year for the Association. We stand at a major decision points for the future of Melbourne’s transport and urban character, such as only comes up once every 10 or 20 years.**

Each time the result has long-term implications. The early-1980s fight against the Lonie Report led to a tactical victory, but stopped short of lasting reform, à la Perth or Vancouver. The late-1990s campaigns against CityLink and EastLink failed to stop these toll-roads, but raised awareness of the self-defeating nature of urban motorway building, which only grew since as Melbourne’s traffic problem worsened.

Public opinion is now firmly on the side of public transport ahead of road-building, as revealed consistently in poll after poll and forum after forum since the turn of the century. Yet our politicians still seem to be lagging a generation behind, enthralled by a well-connected and well-financed road lobby that rarely fails to see its pet projects built.

Right now that pet project is the \$8 billion East West traffic tunnel between Clifton Hill and Kensington, with a threatened \$7 billion western section to Deer Park. Despite lacking both a popular mandate and a published business case, the Napthine Government calls this its number one transport priority, and is acting with unprecedented and undue haste to sign construction contracts before the election next November to ensure the decision is kept out of the hands of the people of Victoria.

This year also saw the tragic loss after a two-year battle with cancer of outspoken public transport scholar and advocate Dr Paul Mees, a past president of the Association from 1993 to 2001. In his final

public address delivered by video a week before his passing, Paul reminded us that the East West link is not only a colossal waste of money and a non-solution to traffic congestion, but also a generational drain on the Victorian transport budget, that would soak up all the funds available for major public transport projects for decades.

So it was clear to our Committee that the East West link is the single greatest threat to achieving the Association’s objective: a first-rate public transport system in Victoria. Our strategic priority is thus to see it cancelled in favour of a package of alternative public transport and local road measures, planned

and managed by a revitalised and competent public authority. Success in this would be the most fitting tribute to Paul and his tireless work on behalf of public transport over the last quarter century.

The Association has therefore, for the first time in many years, employed a campaigner to complement and focus our volunteer efforts. In May, Cait Jones was tasked with spearheading a broad campaign to convert the

widespread popular sentiment for public transport into effective action for change, to stop the East West link and get political commitment to sustainable alternatives. Cait’s work has brought out a show of grassroots energy in support of public transport not seen for years, culminating in the recent launch of *Public Transport Not Traffic* in cooperation with like-minded groups across the state. (See detailed article below.)

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**Tony Abbott will only fund roads, not public transport. Why?  
“Mostly, there just aren’t enough people wanting to go ...  
at a particular time to justify any vehicle larger than a car”**



## Keeping in touch...

### PTUA office

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### Membership Enquiries

Call or e-mail the office (see above)

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

### Internet

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

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

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

### Committee

- Anthony Morton – President  
Tim Long – Secretary  
Phil Bourke – Treasurer

Daniel Bowen

Alison Clarke

Matthew Ferrantino

Ian Hundley

Yvonne Kirk

Jeremy Lunn

David Robertson

Nalla Sivarasa

Bruce Sutherland

#### Branch convenors:

Paul Westcott – Geelong

Terry Konstandelis – Eastern Suburbs

### 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

## PTUA AGM - 14th November 2013.

Chris Hale of the University of Melbourne spoke about the importance heavy rail for Melbourne, looked at what upgrades will be needed into the future.

The inaugural Paul Mees award was presented jointly to Trevor Carroll and Darren Peters of the South Morang And Mernda Rail Alliance (see more details on page 6).

Cait Jones talked about ongoing and future PTUA campaigning - see page 7.

Election of 2013/14 Committee: As the number of nominations equalled the number of vacant positions at the time that nominations closed, no ballot was carried out. See above for the new committee membership.

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Newsletter contributors Daniel Bowen, Cait Jones, Tony Morton, Paul Westcott.

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Our thanks to Margaret Pullar and the dedicated mailout team.

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In parallel, the Association has renewed its fundraising efforts, with a major drive launched in August. Our heartfelt thanks are extended to all those PTUA members and supporters who

have given generously to support our campaign work.

With your support the PTUA will carry though this campaign to next year's State election and beyond. Together with those who will bear the brunt of this destructive project directly, and

all those dismayed at the destruction of Royal Park and Melbourne's urban fabric, we believe the campaign is winnable. Visit [www.ptnt.org](http://www.ptnt.org) to learn about assisting with our most important campaign so far this century.

## State of Environment Report reignites the wrong debate

**The 2013 Victorian State of the Environment Report, launched in November by Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Kate Auty, contains hundreds of pages of sound observations and recommendations dealing with Victoria's environment.**

Unfortunately, much good work on climate change, air quality, biodiversity, land use, water conservation and the health of our waterways, oceans and coasts has been overshadowed by an unfortunate slant in the urban transport chapter—picked up by *The Age* on 29 November under the headline “*Buses, not trains, key to improving Melbourne's public transport system, report argues*”.

In brief, the Commissioner appears to want to open up another Bus Versus Rail culture war, at a time when communities still have to work hard to muster political support for *any* kind of serious public transport improvement.

We read for example on page 453:

*Beyond the need to plan transport options in a place-based way to deal with local conditions, we also need to shed a century-long commitment to fixed-rail methods of conveying multiple passengers. There are other, cheaper, highly efficient methods that do not require the heavy fixed infrastructure of rail networks, at least in suburban settings.*

This reflects a view popular among some transport economists and bus industry lobbyists that buses, in the form of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), are an ‘optimal’ mode of public transport. So it's been argued that with just the right supporting

infrastructure, buses can carry as many people just as quickly over any distance as a train line can—only for a fraction of the cost.

The view is not supported by transport experts such as Vukan Vuchic (author of definitive texts *Urban Transit: Systems and Technology* and *Urban Transit: Operations, Planning and Economics*), or Jarrett Walker (author of *Human Transit*). They emphasise that planners, especially in large cities, should not embrace a single mode as ‘optimal’, but build multimodal networks, using each mode where its characteristics give it a comparative advantage. As Vuchic states, “[In most large cities] the optimal transportation system should consist of several complementary modes coordinated in a single multimodal system.”

Real-world evidence bears this out. Today most of the cost of building train lines in existing urban areas is not in the tracks or overhead wires, but in securing a dedicated, grade separated right-of-way. Vuchic points out it is this right-of-way that enables high capacities, whether for rail or BRT systems. So it should not be surprising that the cost of building Brisbane's BRT corridors—from \$7 million/km in ‘greenfield’ locations to \$465 million/km for underground tunnels—is almost exactly the same as Transperth spends to build rail lines, on a like-for-like basis. Politicians and bureaucrats, however, are invited to picture the low cost of running ordinary on-street bus services and imagine that a BRT service is no different.

Trains have a comparative advantage where travel is across

large numbers of suburbs, and also where large numbers need to travel within a single corridor. This is due to two almost universally-recognised ways trains differ from buses: they provide greater carrying capacity per track (when built to up-to-date standards), and offer a smoother ride which allows people to undertake other activities while travelling. Buses, meanwhile, are unbeatable for building networks that cover a dispersed urban area where fewer need to travel on any one route.

So it's difficult to find, anywhere in the developed world, a city of 1 million people or more with well-used public transport (mode share at least 20% among motorised trips), that doesn't operate a multimodal network combining an excellent rail backbone with excellent local buses or trams.

The obvious parallel is with the road network in car-dependent cities: motorways cater to long-distance and high-volume travel, supported by a hierarchy of arterial and collector roads. Just as motorways have been a key part of the road lobby prescription for boosting car travel in large cities, so rail has a key role to play in boosting public transport mode share.

Public transport advocates face a battle ahead to make public transport competitive with car travel. Investment in both rail and bus upgrades is needed—not least in Melbourne, a city of four million people with an extensive train network (albeit one with gaps). A rerun of the wild-goose chase for the ‘optimal’ transport mode is a distraction from the real transport debate we need to have.

## Trains - government crows, but still major problems

**In a recent statement, the state government bragged that “New figures show Melbourne trains are less crowded and more punctual”.**

It is a reminder that you can't always believe statistics. While the punctuality figures provided by the government may indeed show improvement, we know that a big factor is the now common occurrence for trains to be altered to skip stops. Metro has acknowledged the practice.

One might argue that it is sometimes justified in the counter-peak direction in order to get a train and driver into position for a peak hour service. But we have seen this occurs in the peak direction - for instance a train leaving Flinders Street around 6pm, altered to skip almost all its stations to the suburbs.

And while the percentage of crowded trains might be down, crowding remains a daily reality on

some lines, particularly for peak hour commuters, and not just when there are cancellations or delays.

Notably the government didn't boast of managing to reduce the rate of cancellations - hardly surprising, as the figure for the last 12 months (to October) remains at 1.6%, an increase from the 1.15% for the calendar year 2010.



This is hardly surprising. In just one week (24th to 30th of November), delays included:

- faulty trains blocking other services at Footscray, Hoppers Crossing, Hawksburn

- track equipment faults at Newport, Macaulay, Southern Cross, Sandringham, and on the Cranbourne line

- signal faults at South Yarra, Werribee, near Footscray, and on the Stony Point line (on two separate days)

- train faults affecting the Werribee, Hurstbridge, Sunbury lines

- a lift out of service at Parliament due to a recurring fault

And there were numerous delays that are at least partly, if not wholly outside Metro's control, such as vandalised trains, police requests, and passengers requiring medical attention.

It's all a reminder that more needs to be done to improve the frequency and reliability of the train network.

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## Early bird to be scrapped?

At the time of writing we are hearing unconfirmed reports that the Early Bird fare - free travel on metropolitan trains before 7am on weekdays - is to be scrapped from January 2014.

The PTUA has had misgivings about the Early Bird scheme since its introduction, including a lack of early trains on some lines, and the fares not being valid on V/Line, buses or trams, encouraging people to drive to stations.

But there can be little doubt that since it was introduced in March 2008, it has helped shift passenger

demand from crowded morning peak services to a time when spare train capacity was available.

Research by Professor Graham Currie of Monash University in 2009 showed that it had moved around 2600 passengers from peak hour, the equivalent of about five trains, saving the government around \$100 million.

Recent figures from PTV indicate over 45,000 people enter stations every weekday morning before 7am. If scrapping Early Bird caused a third of those to switch to peak, there would be a huge

impact on crowding in the morning peak. For those whose work days subsequently finish later, it would likely add to crowding in the evening peak as well.

The question must be asked - if the government is scrapping Early Bird, is it ready for the consequences? Trains are not like Doctor Who's TARDIS - they have limited room on the inside. And what other changes are in store in the government's quest to scrape in a little more revenue?



## E-class trams

The first two of Melbourne's new tram fleet, the E-class, went into service in November, initially on busy route 96. They represent the first Australian-made trams in decades, and an important expansion of the number of accessible low-floor trams.

This has enabled low-floor trams to start on route 19 for the first time, and in turn will result in other routes gaining newer trams.

Unfortunately the E-class trams have not been without their problems. Within about a week, both were temporarily out of service - one having been in a collision with a car, the other with a fault.

Feedback on the new design has been generally positive. The trams appear to provide a reasonable

number of seats, but also a fair amount of standing room to cope with big crowds.

And for the first time, CCTV is



fitted externally in an attempt to catch motorists illegally and dangerously failing to give way to tram passengers.

Cameras were to have been fitted to older trams for this purpose

some years ago, but this trial was abandoned. It is pleasing to see such a programme going ahead, and PTUA will keenly await the results of such enforcement of the law.

The new trams are not perfect. Like their European counterparts introduced last decade, they have the route number on the left hand side of the destination sign, making it difficult to see in a row of approaching trams.

But nonetheless, it is good to see the number of accessible trams increasing, and if the initial rollout is successful, we hope the state government will expand the current order of fifty - by at the very least the extra ten the Coalition pledged at the last election - preferably more.

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## New year's Eve - major works over the summer

This year marks ten years since New Year's Eve 2003/04 - the last year that public transport did not run all night after the fireworks.

Members may recall that after the last trains and trams departed the city around 1am on the 1st of January 2004, many passengers were left behind.

In what was to become one of the most successful PTUA campaigns of recent years, a small team of volunteers was out gathering photo and video evidence on the night, and over the following days, intense television and newspaper

coverage of the debacle ensured that the government backed down, and pledged all-night services.

And so as with every New Year's Eve since 2004/5, there will be all-night metropolitan trains and trams (apart from a handful of routes), as well as Nightrider buses. In the western suburbs things will be a little more difficult, with Regional Rail Link works resulting in trains being replaced by buses on some the Sunbury line, as well as some V/Line services.

We're also expecting major works on the Mitcham grade separations

during January, which will result in extended periods of "bustitution".

Obviously while it's good to see upgrade works moving forward, PTV and operators do need to lift their game when it comes to bus replacement services. Too often we hear of problems with information (both that provided in advance, and during disruptions), insufficient scheduling of buses (including low floor/accessible buses), and a lack of on-site staff to help.

## Inaugural Paul Mees Award to ‘people power’ transport activists

**The PTUA has presented the inaugural Paul Mees Award for transport advocacy to Darren Peters and Trevor Carroll of the South Morang and Mernda Rail Alliance.**

PTUA president Tony Morton presented the award to Darren and Trevor at our November AGM.

Darren and Trevor are worthy recipients of the inaugural Paul Mees Award: a great example of ‘people power’, working hard, battling bureaucracy and politicians to bring better outcomes for their local community.

They have laboured tirelessly to bring much-needed rail services to the northern suburbs, and the fact that trains now run to South Morang is due in no small part to their campaigning. They continue

to push for a further rail extension to Mernda, and the PTUA is right behind them.



The fact that governments of both sides have resisted providing fast frequent efficient public transport into all parts of Melbourne is a damning indictment on the state of transport planning in Victoria.

The loss of Paul Mees has left a big gap in transport advocacy. Paul was a fierce campaigner for

public transport, and is greatly missed. In making this award, we hope it can help in some way to ensure his legacy lives on.

We inaugurated the Paul Mees Award to commemorate Paul’s outstanding work as an advocate for public transport and a world-renowned transport academic. He was best known publicly for his tireless promotion of the role of public transport as president of the PTUA from 1993 to 2001.

As outlined in innumerable tributes (including our obituary in September’s *PTUA News*), Paul was never scared of shining a light into dark corners and to question what the politicians, bureaucrats and the community might have assumed was good policy and practice.

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## Geelong branch report

**We are facing another concerted attempt to remove bus stops from their central location in Geelong, only three years after a long campaign to put them back there.**

The anti-bus campaign is subtler now, in that its proponents, who include two new councillors, say they want to create a transit hub at Geelong station. That seems reasonable on the face of it, but means that no buses will travel through the city, and the only way passengers will be able to get to the CBD is via a circle bus that will skirt the city proper on a one-way loop.

The problems of that sort of bus operation are well recognised by anyone with any knowledge of the way good public transport

works. Our members have been writing to the new mayor and other councillors expressing their support for buses continuing to stop at convenient locations in the central city.

With the completion of the Regional Rail Link tracks between the Maribyrnong River and Southern Cross station, it has been announced that most Geelong trains will use the new tracks from December 22, bypassing North Melbourne station. This will have a significant impact on about half of Geelong passengers in the morning peak, who currently alight at North Melbourne and will lose their very convenient access to City Loop services, the 401 bus and suburban trains.

The new G21 public transport strategy is due to be released for public comment very shortly. We are fairly confident that the AECOM consultancy team will have produced a reasonable plan, but we are worried about what will emerge now that the five constituent councils have had a chance to “analyse” it.

The introduction of Myki on V/Line has gone much more smoothly than any other aspect of the system’s introduction. About 80% of Geelong line passengers are reportedly using it. Undoubtedly one of the major reasons for the relative success of the launch is that every train has a conductor who can assist passengers to use and understand the system.

## Labor's 'Project 10000' an important start, but not yet a plan

**Twelve months out from the State election, the Victorian Labor Opposition has responded to the Napthine Government's bait-and-switch on public transport and East West link obsession with its own policy document, 'Project 10000'.**

The title is a reference to job creation, and aimed directly at the government's PR spin, claiming the East West link project is essential because it will create jobs. Of course as the Opposition makes clear and as we have long known, any money spent on transport projects creates jobs—and it is likely more jobs are created for a given amount of investment in public transport as opposed to a road project.

It is clear the Opposition has listened to community demands for better public transport, but it is still risking everything with its weak position on the East West Link.

Headlining the document is a pledge to remove fifty of 'the worst' level crossings on the train network. This makes a lot of sense and is one of the more significant items in our proposed package of East West Link alternatives.

Unlike an inner city traffic tunnel costing billions of dollars, it will benefit communities right across Melbourne, by streamlining train services as well as cutting delays for motorists, road-based public transport, cyclists and pedestrians.

But this and all the other vital investments in public transport are at risk if the ALP lets the \$15 billion East West Link go ahead. This road threatens to send Victoria hurtling at full speed back to the 1950s and turn Melbourne into Detroit. As long as the ALP leaves wiggle room for the road lobby, there will be no serious money to rebuild a public transport system for the 21st century.

Given the undue haste with which the government is acting, and the likelihood (despite all spin to the contrary) that no binding contracts will be signed by October, it is vital that the ALP makes it clear to business that it will do all it can inside and outside the parliament to prevent this mad and destructive waste of money from going ahead.

The document is also let down by the lack of any explicit position on high-capacity signalling for the train network. As we have

stressed, this is the single most effective capacity boosting measure in Melbourne's rail backbone, and involves a fraction of the cost of other desirable large projects such as the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel.

Similarly disappointing is the emphasis on Park and Ride with no mention of feeder bus services, which provide access to railway stations at a fraction of the cost of car parking and do not oblige people to drive a car to use public transport. The proposal to add lanes to the Tullamarine Freeway is likely only to benefit Melbourne Airport's private car parking business, and further postpone the long-overdue rail link to the airport.

"Project 10000" is an important start, but falls short of a comprehensive plan to fix Victoria's transport problems. Our train network is falling apart, and it will take more than grade separations and a CBD tunnel to fix our public transport system. With traffic crippling the State, it is imperative that we start immediately on the 21st century public transport system we voted for in 2010, rather than a traffic nightmare.

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## New campaign launched.

PTUA are excited to be a driving force within the Public Transport Not Traffic campaign. Public Transport Not Traffic is the voice of communities across Melbourne opposing the East-West Link. These communities, from Werribee to Frankston, are coming together to demand better public transport – not another inner city traffic tunnel.

Public Transport Not Traffic was launched on the morning of Friday 29 November 2013 with 21 community groups coordinating action across Melbourne's rail network.

The launch was a huge success, with many people signing up to be part of the campaign, and the number of community groups

supporting the campaign is growing daily.

PTUA urges members to sign up to the PTNT campaign website for updates and take part in the various campaign activities. [www.ptnt.org](http://www.ptnt.org)

For more information contact our community campaigner, Cait Jones, [cait.jones@ptua.org.au](mailto:cait.jones@ptua.org.au)

# PTUA News

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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 \$30 per year (\$15 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 Tony Morton, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne.