



State election affirms rejection of roads-first transport policy

The 2018 Victorian election delivered a decisive victory to the Andrews Government, which commentators have attributed to its policy agenda dominated by heavy investment in transport and other public infrastructure, and a nuanced approach to contemporary social challenges such as climate change, substance abuse and public health.

But it equally represents an emphatic re-affirmation of the electorate's repudiation - in both 2010 and 2014 - of transport policy that puts roads and private car transport ahead of public transport investment.

While there were key points of difference between the ALP and Coalition on energy and 'law and order' matters, transport infrastructure was another important policy line-in-the-sand given Andrews' strong 2014 mandate centred on major rail projects and on level-crossing removal. Significantly, the Matthew Guy opposition proposed a tactical switch from road-rail separation to road-road separation, putting forward a "removal of 55 congested road intersections" platform that was clearly inspired by the ALP's "removal of 50 dangerous and congested level crossings" but put the focus entirely on facilitating private car travel.

With its intersection plan and related initiatives (such as turning the Dingley Arterial road into a fully grade-separated freeway), the Coalition appeared determined to pursue road-only measures, as distinct from multimodal initiatives that would assist train and bus services while also easing delays for motorists. Many commentators joined the PTUA in

recognising the plans as an attempt to reanimate misguided postwar schemes, of the sort that saw St Kilda Junction and other suburban hubs transformed from vibrant activity centres to blighted concrete jungles to be left behind as fast as possible.

A regrettable aspect of the election campaign was the ALP-Coalition unity ticket on two massive motorway projects, the West Gate Tunnel and the North East Link. This went against the ALP's own 2014 promise for targeted road measures sufficient to

remove heavy trucks from residential streets. The new motorways by contrast are only likely to exacerbate truck traffic on streets such as Millers Road and Williamstown Road in the west, and on Rosanna Road, Heidelberg Road and Grimshaw Street in the north-east.

But the Coalition went one better, promising to restart the East West Link project rejected by voters only four years previously. This would

categorically reinforce the role of the North East Link as a radial central-city access road, as distinct from the orbital freight bypass it claims to be, further magnifying its destructive effects.

The election result, unprecedented in some places in rendering previous 'blue ribbon' Coalition seats marginal, represents a decisive rejection by the Victorian public of this kind of 'roads first' platform.

The result is also a serious challenge to claims the 'Skyrail' approach to road-rail separation is broadly unpopular. While some may argue that there are adverse effects in the immediate vicinity, some of the



Under the Skyrail at Hughesdale.

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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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E-mail the office (see above).

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

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Melbourne:
Meetings will be advertised in PTUA News and on our website
www.ptua.org.au

Geelong:
First Saturday of every month (except January), 10:30am
Mary MacKillop Room, St Mary's Parish Offices, cnr. Little Myers and Yarra streets, Geelong

Ballarat:
Meetings will be held regularly - watch the newsletter and website for details.

*The PTUA
wishes all our
members a safe
and festive
holiday season
and a happy New
Year.*

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Upgrades welcome, but not late notice

With the Labor government returned, we can expect to see ongoing major works around the rail network for the foreseeable future.

The Dandenong line (between Westall and Cranbourne/Pakenham/Gippsland) is disrupted for most of December, with free rides (and credit to Myki Passes) offered to placate passengers, as these lines have been hit more than most with planned shutdowns.

Apart from level crossing removals (despite the skyrail design enabling trains to keep running during most of the project) disruptions on these lines are continuing with upgrades to enable the new High Capacity Metro Trains, the first one of which is expected to be tested early next year.

All this is very welcome. Major upgrades are needed across the public transport network to bring the system up to 21st century standards.

Less welcome is the reluctance of authorities to provide passengers with details of major works more than a few weeks in advance. In the case of the Dandenong line, there was a vague early warning in September, but the specifics only became clear in November.

At the time of writing, we assume there will be further network disruptions in early January, but as yet these have not been announced, despite them being typically planned months ahead.

This is disappointing. Many people, if they are told early enough, can plan leave from work

to avoid having to commute during major planned disruptions. Every person that does so means less of a burden on bus replacement services, making life easier for authorities and for others who must travel.

Sydney Trains publishes a calendar listing of specific closures up to two months ahead. And we can do it in Victoria: in 2012, then minister Terry Mulder had major works flagged up to three months in advance. This practice should be re-introduced. Even if precise times and dates are not finalised, if project work is going to shut down a rail line for a period of time, particularly if it will affect large numbers of weekday commuters, the earlier people know about it the better.

State election - continued

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largest swings toward the government occurred in electorates where rail-over-road separations have either been completed or are well-advanced in planning. It is significant too that built examples of elevated rail now exist, which can be directly compared in aesthetic and noise terms with the far more intrusive elevated roads that previous governments have inflicted on suburbs from Southbank to Dandenong.

A disappointing aspect of the election campaign was the lack of major-party commitment to the Metro 2 rail tunnel from Newport to Clifton Hill. Perhaps not coincidentally, the only substantial party to declare for this project -

the Victorian Greens - was also the only one not promising to spend \$20 billion on motorways. After a difficult campaign in the lower house, the Greens have held their position, swapping the loss of Northcote for a win in Brunswick, while keeping Prahran and Melbourne. Their upper house position has worsened as a result of their decision not to participate in what some have characterised as a "pay-to-play lottery for buying seats" through 'gaming' of the group-ticket voting system. The same refusal to game preferences also appears to have spelled defeat for Fiona Patten of the Reason Party, who has supported a number of initiatives such as duplication of the Upfield line and extension of the 86 tram to South Morang.

The other major disappointment has been a relative lack of attention to actual public transport service delivery - boosting frequencies on our train, tram and bus lines. The Coalition retreated from its one substantial promise of running more train lines every 10 minutes all day.

The PTUA will be following up the election result by continuing to engage the Andrews government (including the new Minister for public transport services, Melissa Horne), to ensure proper attention is given to both a strong public transport infrastructure programme and to service delivery. We also look forward to dealing with a diverse and community-focussed crossbench in the Legislative Council.

Stories of Growth

What's worse than when population growth puts strain on our transport systems? When road traffic grows even faster than population. But that was the reality in Melbourne for nearly four decades.

Prominent among policy matters discussed in the recent state election campaign was the high rate of population growth in Melbourne over the past decade, and the adequacy of transport infrastructure to respond to this. The PTUA's own contribution to the debate, 'Stories of Growth', aims to bring 50 years' worth of evidence to bear on the question.

By assembling three basic historical data series - population, road vehicle kilometres, and public transport boardings over the past half century in Melbourne, some facts immediately come to light:

- Growth in road travel in Melbourne (mainly car use) greatly outran population growth up until 2004, but has since grown less rapidly than population.
- When car use was outrunning population growth the excess was substantial. Had population grown at the current 2.5% rate for the entire past half century, but car use grown at the same rate as population instead of outrunning it, we'd now have a traffic level closer to what we had in 1996, about 25% less traffic overall than today. Had car use matched actual population growth, we'd now

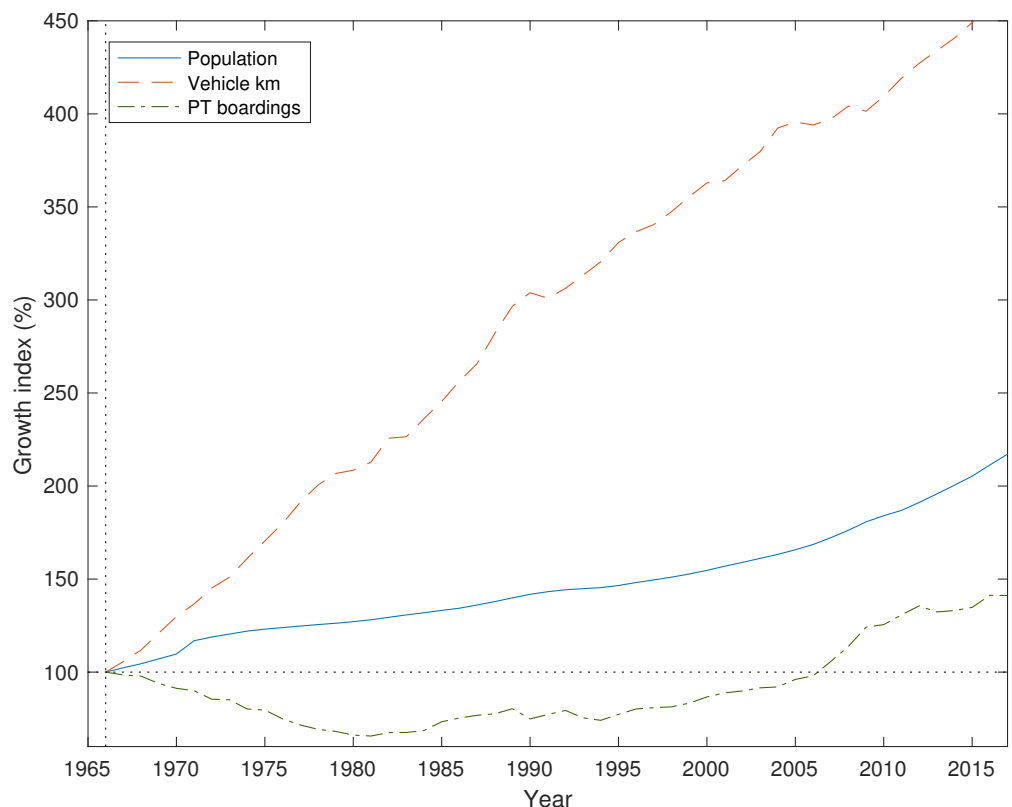
be at 1982 traffic levels, even taking into account the recent population boom.

- Public transport use was collapsing for most of the time car use was growing, but even in recent times, PT use hasn't substantially outrun population except for the period between 2005 and 2010, when planners were completely unprepared to deal with such growth.

Regardless of population trends, growth in traffic volumes responds

more road capacity, we could return to the old pattern of traffic outrunning population growth, which would be disastrous even if our population stopped growing tomorrow.

At the same time, we should be readying our public transport to do more of the heavy lifting, and take the pressure off the road system. The next big surge in passenger numbers should be welcomed rather than resisted, with infrastructure and services that are ready to cater to it.



Population, vehicle km and PT boardings, 1966-2017 as percentages of 1966 values. From 'Stories of Growth'.

primarily to supply of infrastructure and services. The recent moderation in road travel growth is a reassuring trend that already means Melbourne is less congested than if traffic had still followed population. But the threat is that if politicians give in to the temptation to build heaps

Find the full report at

www.ptua.org.au/2018/11/14/stories-of-growth

Geelong branch report

The state election saw Labor capture South Barwon electorate, which includes the rapidly-expanding suburban areas of Armstrong Creek and Torquay.

We talked to both the-defeated Liberal member, Andrew Katos, and his successful Labor challenger, former MHR Darren Cheeseman, about the urgent need for bus services to be provided in Armstrong Creek, where car dependence is rapidly being locked in. Katos wasn't at all responsive, but Cheeseman noted that, while door-knocking in Armstrong Creek, the lack of local public transport was commonly raised.

Perhaps as a result, Labor did promise one (only) bus route in Armstrong Creek. Transport for Victoria couldn't tell us anything about the route, frequency, or span of hours of the promised service.

We know that PTV had a comprehensive bus route plan for Armstrong Creek worked out more than five years ago, and bids for funding at least some of it have been submitted at budget time.

The election result hasn't altered the likelihood of the duplication of the rail track between South Geelong and Waurin Ponds. Both sides of politics have committed to it, despite some politicking about the funding.

At least we'll no longer have to try to nut out how the Coalition will deliver on its vague promises of 200km/h Geelong trains in their first term, or whether its costing of \$19 billion was realistic or achievable.

The Labor government has a much more orthodox approach to approving Geelong-Melbourne services with its "Western Rail Plan", which involves a planning process first, followed by construction.

However, the need to separate regional and suburban services is urgent, with new subdivisions springing up every month along the Tarnait section of the Regional Rail Link. That means more overcrowding, and the demand for new stations, which, if still served by regional trains, will only exacerbate the unreliability and congestion already being experienced.

the Geelong Authority to running any buses in our main streets.

They have finally conceded that "some" buses will have to run there, but not all. When asked how that would work, they say they'll leave it up to the transport experts.

That is despite the fact that the experts (GTA Consultants) recommended earlier this year that all bus routes should continue to run through the city, where the central stops cater for 1.3 million passenger boardings each year.



Trains at Geelong Railway station - source - Wikipedia/Marcus Wong

The long-overdue Transport Network Operating Plan for central Geelong, which essentially involves where buses will run, is supposed to be finalised before Christmas. The reason for the delay is the absurd resistance by those in charge of the Central Geelong Revitalisation Project and

Latest Threat to 'The Overland'

Public transport advocates were distressed to learn at the end of November that the first-term Coalition Government in South Australia intended to withdraw its share of funding for 'The Overland' train service between Melbourne and Adelaide, throwing doubt on its continued operation.

Over the past quarter century the Overland service has been gradually eviscerated, in part due to the rise of cheap airfares making the service increasingly uncompetitive with air travel, but also due to the same pattern of neglect and underinvestment that historically beset public transport in both Melbourne and Adelaide. Thus while 25 years ago the Overland ran a day and night service 7 days a week under joint Commonwealth and Victorian Government operation, today it runs just two services a week as an adjunct to the Ghan and Indian

Pacific tourist operations of private operator Great Southern Rail.

The Overland operation has been partially government funded ever since privatisation. Currently the Victorian Government provides annual funding of around \$1.5 million, topped up with \$0.3 to \$0.4 million a year from the SA Government - the latter replacing a concession fare subsidy from the Commonwealth that ceased in 2015. Overall, the public funding is in the same order of magnitude as that for one 'SmartBus' route in Melbourne or one O-Bahn route in Adelaide.

The withdrawal of part of this funding will trigger a rethink of the service. The PTUA stresses the importance of retaining the Overland as the predominant low-carbon alternative to air and car travel between Melbourne and Adelaide. However, if it is to be 'rescued' (whether by a newly re-elected Andrews Government or by a Federal Government newly

mindful of its responsibilities for interstate rail travel) it needs reform to place it in a more competitive position vis-a-vis air travel. This would mean restoring a 7-day service as a bare minimum: the current part-time operation, like part-time bus services in Melbourne suburbs, represents a false economy that actively deters passengers.

This crisis also highlights the way the Overland has become the sole rail option for travel within Victoria west of Ararat, ever since the axing of Wimmera V/Line services in the early 1990s. Regardless of the ongoing status of the Overland, the Victorian Government must reconsider the provision of regular service to the substantial populations in Stawell, Horsham and the broader Wimmera region. Given the break of gauge, this will refocus attention on the need for a strategic investment in standard-gauge passenger rolling stock for V/Line.

Ballarat branch report

It's been a very busy few months for the Ballarat Branch. In October we launched the *Connecting Ballarat* proposal, which calls for a reshaping of Ballarat's bus network, improvements to timetables, increases in frequency and extending the span of service hours. (Read the report here www.ptua.org.au/2018/10/10/connecting-ballarat/).

The reaction from the community and local media was very positive, and it received broadly supportive comments from the major political

parties – though no firm commitments or funding at the time. Later in the campaign, the Liberal party committed \$3m to increase frequencies and extend service hours; Labor reaffirmed their intention to review and improve the buses once the new bus interchange at Ballarat station was complete, but with no firm funding behind this. V/Line train frequencies on the Ballarat line are expected to increase in late 2019, and the interchange should well and truly be open by then. Given that Labor has been returned to

government with a resounding majority – winning at least 2 of the 3 Ballarat seats we we go to press – we will be working hard over the next 12 months to get them to introduce bus reforms at the same time the train frequencies increase.

A few weeks before the election, the branch held a candidates' forum, with Labor, Liberal, Greens and Animal Justice Party candidates from the Wendouree district speaking about their parties' plans for public transport *continued on p7*

Ballarat branch report

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and answering questions on key issues for the Ballarat region. The forum drew quite a good turnout, and a very lively discussion took place.

The Coalition's plan for faster regional trains generated a lot of discussion – and skepticism – in the leadup to the election, but now that Labor has been returned to office, the focus will shift to their policies for the Ballarat line. Three level crossing removals in Deer Park will be included in the next tranche of 25, and they've funded business cases and technical work for Metro services to Melton and

potentially higher-speed rail to Ballarat.

The Melton electrification project is sorely needed to add capacity and reduce overcrowding, and should be timed to be completed at the same time as the Metro Tunnel.

One thing we will definitely be pushing for is track duplications further down the Ballarat line, given the need to increase frequencies, and the huge problems the single-track sections will continue to cause for the line's reliability. The Coalition plan involved very little additional duplication, and as we said at the time, there's no point having a train

that can do 200km/h if it has to sit in a crossing loop doing 0km/h. This will be equally true for Labor's version.

In 2019, the Ballarat branch will be changing its branch meetings. Instead of the current system of regular monthly meetings, all at the same time of day and day of the week, we will be shaking things up slightly. In 2019 we will have meetings less frequently – roughly once every three months – and will vary when they're held, to allow a wider range of people to attend them. We'll also be having guest speakers to attract more attendees. Stay tuned for more details on that front!

AGM report

This year's Paul Mees Award honoured two people whose outstanding contributions to public transport advocacy have been in telling the stories around recent transport campaigns and issues in Victoria.

These were Clay Lucas from The Age and Andrew Lund from Channel 9, whose print and TV journalism respectively have kept transport front and centre in the state's political debates.

Following the award presentation, the AGM had a presentation from Rachel Lynskey, coordinator of the Sustainable Cities campaign run jointly between PTUA and Friends of the Earth. Rachel recapped the

campaign activities for the year, from the launch of the community powered transport plan 'Get On Board' in early 2018, to the Fitzroy Station action raising awareness of

organisation and financial position for the year.

Formalities concluded with the election of the PTUA Committee for 2019. The PTUA is delighted to have filled all elected Committee positions this year, and extends a warm welcome to new Committee members Stuart James and Tom Killip. Branch convenors Paul Westcott (Geelong) and Ben Lever (Ballarat) will continue as ex officio Committee members.



L-R - Paul Mees Award winners Andrew Lund and Clay Lucas, with Tony Morton and Daniel Bowen at the PTUA AGM.

the Metro 2 proposal in the lead-up to the state election.

President Tony Morton, Secretary David Robertson and Treasurer Phil Bourke then gave a summary of the PTUA's activities,

The Association wishes all members a happy and safe festive season and will shortly be developing its strategic plan for the coming year.

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