

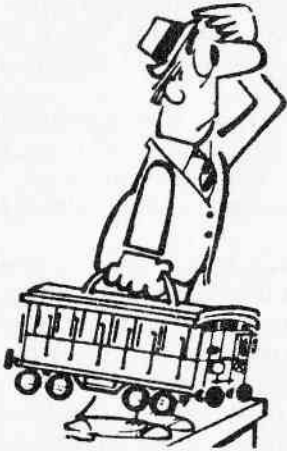
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# TTA NEWSLETTER

Train Traveller's Association Newsletter

61 Leila Road Ormond 3163

**JULY 1984, VOL. 8 No. 4**



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## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**The Leader of the Opposition,**

*The Hon. J. G. Kennett,*

has kindly agreed to be guest speaker.

**Don't forget the time: 5.30 p.m.**

**Venue: BANQUET ROOM, Victoria Hotel, 215 Little Collins Street.**

## HIGH-SPEED RAIL TRAVEL IN FRANCE, JAPAN, and the USA

During my research project in France, in 1981-2, I used the TGV regularly. It is an extraordinary achievement, the more so in that it has been an astonishing commercial success. It is now reckoned that the private and government funds that built it will be reimbursed with interest in 12 years rather than the planned amortisation of 20 years. After that it will be returning pure profit to the French railways.

From the traveller's point of view, it is also a great achievement. Modern and attractive design in both classes, with second class costing no more than conventional trains, it has excellent meal service in first class (snacks at the bar in second). The carriages are extraordinarily comfortable, and simply from this point of view neither the bullet trains in Japan nor the US Metroliner compares with the TGV.

The Bullet Train, which I took in December during a short tour of Japan, is, however, a magnificent achievement when one recalls that it has been in service for 20 years (in fact, since 1964). The speeds it attains are quite remarkable from that perspective. But it is rather spartan in design – just about as spartan as V/LINE's orange country carriages – and rather austere in its comfort. Seating is five abreast in second class and the seats are a bit cramped for a middle sized Westerner (175 cm). The train is rather bumpy, as we discovered on an expedition to the dining car. But nevertheless these trains are an excellent people-mover in every respect. Each train is 16 carriages long and they run every 20 minutes on most major lines. (There are 116 trains a day making an *average* speed of over 160 km/h.) And, the real proof of Japanese efficiency: markers for each carriage door are painted on the platform floor. You queue up at the marker with the number of your carriage, and the train glides into the station and stops so that each door is precisely in front of the marker for it!

The Metroliner between Washington and Boston I also took in December. To do this properly I should have taken the British HST first but couldn't manage to squeeze it in too. The Metroliners have been entirely refurbished and, with the aid of some technical improvements, sustain higher speeds now than until last year (10 to 15 minutes better between New York and Washington) and they are remarkably comfortable in seating and design. There is an adequate snack service in second class and reasonable meal service in first class (Club Car), but Club Car is horrendously expensive and the food is not so good as the TGV. The USA and British railways have, however, some real distinction in squeezing some speeds out of existing lines – the French and Japanese triumphs are, of course, on entirely new track built in our day, while the US and Britain (and the best classic French trains) are running at speeds up to 200 km/h on track designed in the nineteenth century.

## URBAN TRANSIT SYSTEMS

During last December and January my work took me to Chicago, New York, San Francisco, Washington and Boston. One general impression is that fares seem lower than our new Crabb-system: most of the cities had a 60-cent base fare which included unlimited transfers within the system, though often there was no transfer possible between the heavy rail or underground and the surface system. Cities with higher fares generally had worse systems: notably New York, whose fare jumped from 75 cents to 90 cents while I was there, and Chicago.

New York is, however, embarking on a ten thousand million dollar project to renew

## URBAN TRANSIT SYSTEMS (Cont.)

entirely the Subway (underground) by 1990. Washington and San Francisco both have gleaming new underground systems. Washington's is a real underground and is extremely impressive. San Francisco's BART has now ironed out its teething troubles and is the most comfortable and rapid and sure suburban train I've ever travelled. The main axis of the old tram network, Market Street (which is roughly equivalent to Swanston Street), has been placed underground, one floor above BART, enabling easy transfer to new, articulated trams, which run above ground when they leave Market Street. These two are remarkably comfortable, though spartan compared to the BART trains. They run very smoothly and at much higher speeds than our trams manage. But since BART is administered by a consortium of regional city councils and the trams are run by the city, there is no transfer. Twenty dollars, however, buys you unlimited travel on the Municipal Railway (as it is quaintly called), including all surface vehicles. A 60 cent single ticket gives you two hours' travel anywhere the system goes, which proves that the two-hour system can be bearable if you don't use it for unconscionable fare rises . . .

Chicago and Washington have both extended their undergrounds to their airports; Boston is doing so at present. New York has quite a reasonable express service to JFK airport which is by far the best way to go. It is, however, run on a shoestring like so much in New York: the waiting room for the buses to take you to the separate terminals looks like a locker room left over from the MCG.

So even in the home of the motor car under the unsympathetic Reagan administration, progress is being made. What about Melbourne?

– C. Sowerwine

Editor & Production:

Robin Vowels

We'd like to be able to acknowledge in the same issue those tireless workers who assemble the Newsletter and prepare the mailing out, but that isn't possible since the Newsletter is printed first (obviously). Instead, we include the names of those who have assisted in recent issues, and without whose help none of this would be possible.

John Alexopoulos,

David Bowd,

Bill Devine,

Ken McIntyre,

Patrick O'Connor,

John Prideaux,

Chris Pidd,

Robin Vowels,

Denise Young.

Activities

On 29th May TTA Secretary Ken McIntyre was guest speaker at the annual meeting of the Sunbury Ratepayers' Association held at Sunbury.

Ken spoke of the role that successive state governments have played in transport in Victoria over the past 30 years, and to the success the TTA has had in raising public transport as a major issue.

He called for more support from all public transport users for the TTA in its unmitigated campaign for a better deal for public transport in Victoria.

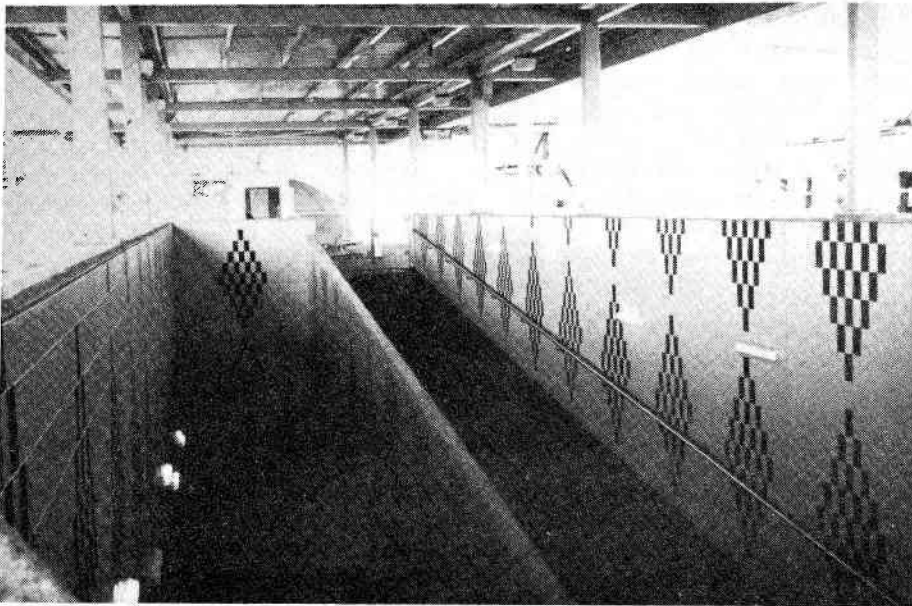
On 17th June, our Secretary was one of a number of speakers who addressed a public meeting in Yarra Park that had been organized to protest against RCA plans to widen Punt Road and to push through the Gardeners Creek freeway link.

He highlighted the virtues of public transport in reducing the need for road works of this nature.

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*Top:* An impressive entrance to the rebuilt Werribee Station is adjacent to the shopping centre. As well as ticket facilities, several modern shops nestle in the spacious subway.



*Below:* A view of the ramps leading to the centre platforms at Werribee, showing the attractively-presented blue and white tiling. All the ramps are readily negotiable by wheelchairs.  
[both photos courtesy Robin Vowels]

## THE JAPANESE CONNECTION

Japan is said to be rapidly approaching the point when she will be the richest nation per capita on earth.

There is a latent curiosity about their highly urbanized existence and unique culture that has been the inspiration for an avalanche of books, articles and documentaries dealing with our northerly neighbours.

We are regularly subjected to shallow information about the Japanese work ethic; the influence of successive religions, and the economic war with the rest of the world which Japan is in the process of winning.

Of particular interest to us is their highly efficient transport system and the carefully unpublicised fact that if the Japanese followed our example and lurched into wholesale car purchase, their country would effectively cease to function as a trading nation.

Journalists writing in cycling magazines tell us about Japanese authorities seriously considering multi-tiered storage for bicycles at railway stations.

A Melbourne daily carried a surprising story among its car advertisements, of a wealthy Japanese living in a house containing most of the modern inconveniences, but choosing to travel to work by train because he considers ownership of a car for personal transport to be socially irresponsible!

To return to bicycles for a moment: the Japanese apparently do not purchase bicycles fitted with the exotic gadgetry their factories export to the west. They choose instead machines that are as simple and as maintenance-free as possible.

No documentary that I have watched, nor any book that has come my way has explored the possibility that the relative simplicity of the Japanese life style and their capacity to return money from surplus earnings to their economy, may be one of the basics of their extraordinary economic strength.

Meanwhile, all we seem to be able to do is to stand by and count the number of profitless cars consumed and the number of private dwellings thrown together around our increasingly unmanageable cities as a scatty barometer of what we equate with a standard of living.

— Rod Byrant

## ELECTRIFICATION OF BRISBANE'S RAIL SYSTEM COMPLETE

Railways of Australia *Network* (December 1983) reported the completion of the Brisbane suburban rail system electrification on 15th October 1983 with the official opening of the reconstructed line to Thornside which had been closed for many years.

The entire project, on which construction began in 1975, was completed 7 months ahead of schedule and very close to the original budget of \$260 million. It involved the electrification of 295 track kilometres over 157 route kilometres.

The energy is supplied at 25kV, 50Hz alternating current (the modern system used widely abroad, e.g. the French TGV) which enables economical construction and operation of the overhead conductors and distribution system.

The Kingston, Shorncliffe and Petrie lines which were brought into electric operation in the previous 13 months have experienced patronage growth of 20% to 30% over that period.

This is a tribute to Brisbane's modern, well-designed, 100kph air-conditioned suburban electric trains which are undoubtedly the best in Australia, even though they pre-date our Comeng trains.

[Alongside the Brisbane trains, Melbourne's light rail vehicles — to be used on the St Kilda and Port Melbourne lines — seem pale. These LRVs will not be air-conditioned and will have a top speed of only 72kph — hardly an attractive proposition.]

— David Bowd

## MARCH COUNCIL MEETING

The following matters were included in discussions at the March TTA Council Meeting:

### Advertisements

The feasibility and costs of advertising the TTA on trains, buses and trams is to be investigated.

### Newsletter Production

Volunteers are needed to assist the Editor in typing articles for the Newsletter.

### Camberwell Station

A submission on the remodelling of Camberwell Station is being prepared.

### Ticket Checkers

The advantages and disadvantages of having railway staff check tickets at exit gates were discussed.

### Ticket Cancellations

Railway procedures for handling ticket cancellations were discussed.

### "Police" Concert

Concern was expressed at the lack of adequate public transport facilities for the "Police" Concert at the Showgrounds. An opportunity to promote the use of the railway system and to generate income was lost because one link in the public transport network – the Showgrounds Station – was not open (as it should have been to meet demand).

– *Doreen Parker*

## ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

In the Melbourne County Court in December, a judgement was handed down which told much about serious failures of Victorian Railways officials to adequately perform their duties.

The case concerned the mother of a well-known footballer, who was involved in an accident on the ramp of Platforms 2 and 3 at Caulfield Station in September 1982.

Throughout the civil action which took a number of days to hear, VicRail officials who were on the platform on the day of the accident, were paraded through the witness box. All denied recollection of the incident.

In her evidence, the plaintiff stated that on her falling, the attendant at the top of the ramp did not even help her up. Assistance was given by two passengers coming up the ramp.

The day after the accident, Mrs Sheedy contacted the Station Master who advised her to contact the Railways Loss Assessor. In his turn, he informed her that he would send her a claim form and said that they would pay her \$300 to cover her expenses. Until the hearing, neither the claim form nor the \$300 had arrived.

The lady was obliged to seek redress in the courts.

The court awarded her \$6,000, but the judge reduced this by 10% for contributory negligence. Costs were awarded in her favour, as well as an extra \$300 interest.

(PJO)

[This article was received early this year, but was held over owing to lack of space. Apologies to PJO.]

## WHY I DO NOT LIKE BUS TRAVEL

I left Foster on a bus for Melbourne, with the words of a local shopkeeper ringing in my ears.

This worthy trader had been told that re-introduction of the South Gippsland passenger train should be at the bottom of the state's list of priorities.

It seems that the road lobbyists had pumped him up with information about all the things Gippsland really needed – like a lovely freeway tacked on to that Mulgrave monster.

Our bus driver was, in the tradition of his ilk, unfailingly polite and helpful. Those boys really work hard to win over the public.

Yet no matter how modern the bus, you are tossed around like a dried pea on a plate every time the bus turns a corner.

I would challenge anyone to travel any sizeable distance on a bus. They would have a hard time arguing that the trip could be compared with the comfort of a modern train moving along on a good set of tracks.

The agricultural type sitting next to me helped to make this particular trip truly memorable. I gathered that he had come aboard direct from cleaning a stable or two. Some of the by-products of his efforts were still sticking to him. He kept leaning past me to peer out the window until I offered to change seats. After getting the window seat, he turned his gaze at my newspaper until I halved it with him. Shortly after his head started to bump on my shoulder as he went to dreamland.

This bus was as full as its companion vehicle heading, by a different route, to the city.

I couldn't move to another seat – there weren't any to spare.

Going for a stroll on a bus is out of the question. Even the dunny seemed to be permanently occupied.

I was stuck with supporting my new friend's head and enjoying his aromas.

Buses are fine for feeder routes and stand-by transport. They must be at least 98% safer to travel than cars, yet if this form of transport is to be at the core of a tourist industry revival, then our politicians should go back for a second look.

No matter what fare you pay, travel on a long-distance bus is distinctly second class.

– *Rod Bryant*

## MTA STUDIES BUS SERVICES

The Metropolitan Transit Authority is conducting a series of studies into bus services in metropolitan transport Neighbourhoods.

The purpose of the studies is to recommend measures involving the more effective use of existing resources and services with a view to improving the system. Local community groups are to be consulted as part of the review.

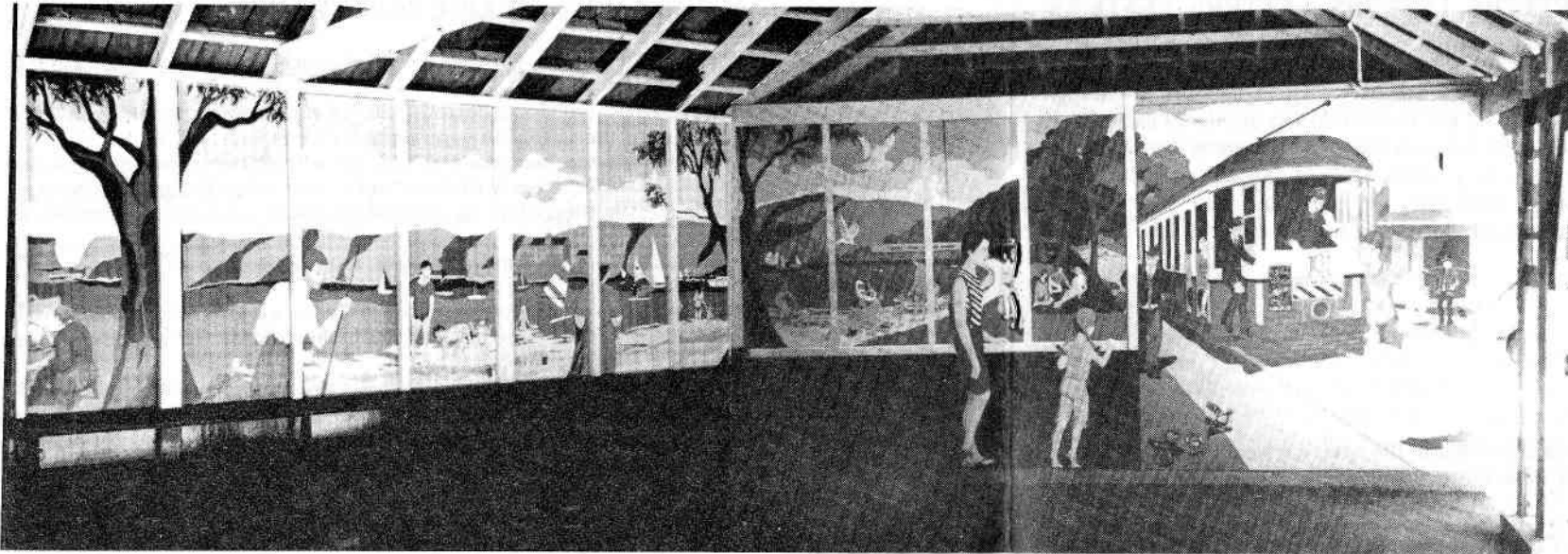
The TTA welcomes the studies. For far too long, public transport services were decided by bureaucrats who, in the main, did not themselves use the services.

Now, the users are able to provide input on such things as existing services, routes, frequency and timings.

The TTA has already held a public meeting in the Ringwood City Library (30th May) so that residents of the Ringwood Neighbourhood could put their cases to us. From that information, the TTA will be making a submission to the study.

Residents of other neighbourhoods should contact the TTA with either written or oral submissions concerning bus services in their area, so that a co-ordinated submission may be made by the TTA.

*Ken McIntyre*



Left: A novel way to brighten a bus waiting shelter can be found in Sydney where this imaginative three-sided coloured mural (two faces shown) depicts scenes from the past 4 decades.

Curiously, though trams were withdrawn some 22 years ago, Queenwood schoolchildren artists saw fit to include a painting of one "approaching" this same waiting shed, the former terminus.

Perhaps some Melbourne railway stations and bus shelters might similarly be permanently decorated.

[courtesy Robin Vowels]

## DON'T MISS YOUR TRAIN — OR ELSE!

With effect from the beginning of July 1984, V/LINE has introduced radical changes in the re-booking and cancellation penalties applying to country passenger services.

From this date, passengers who do not alter or cancel their bookings before the scheduled departure of the train from its starting point, will forfeit their fare, and will have to buy another ticket if they wish to travel on a later train.

The only beneficial change for the user under the new rules is that if cancellation is effected any time before scheduled departure of the train from its starting point, there is no longer any cancellation fee.

Previously, a fee of \$2 was charged for re-booking the journey less than 24 hours before train departure, and the same amount after train departure, although higher penalties applied if a refund were sought.

As usual, this further attack on the consumer has been introduced without warning to the travelling public, even though less than two years ago the TTA formally requested rail management to notify the Association of any proposed changes in existing conditions. Needless to say, such advice has not been forthcoming.

I only became aware of these changed conditions from a card I happened to see stuck on the back wall of the country booking office at Museum Station. Apparently this was for the information of staff rather than clients. The booking clerk could not provide me with any written information on the new rules.

In my opinion, these new penalties are unnecessarily severe. If one is

unfortunate enough to miss a country train (perhaps because a "connecting" service — for example, an MTA suburban train — is late), one might expect to pay a small re-booking fee, but not the full fare of as much as \$50 again.

And what of country residents who drive to a station only to find that the train on which they have booked is running late? If they would prefer to drive on to their destination, must they either forfeit their fares or wait indefinitely for the train to arrive?

Such inequitable conditions as these can only deter patronage and it is scarcely surprising that V/LINE prefer that they are not widely known.

David Bowd

## STOP PRESS

The Association's secretary Ken McIntyre has been appointed to the MTA Board.

This most welcome appointment should augur well for improved communications between the TTA and the Ministry regarding commuter problems.

## LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS

Dear Mr McIntyre,

Thanks for your help in this problem [having a fine waived — Ed]. Your work provides valuable assistance to members of the public, who do not realise that the problem I encountered is able to be fought against. Your Association provides the service whereby one realises his rights and helps soften the blow of big bureaucracy, which often intimidates people.

In my situation, I could have easily given a false name or jumped over the fence, and I was quite set back when I was booked. Your Association provides a good service and I hope it continues well.

*Yours sincerely,  
T. G. Rymer,  
Surrey Hills*

8/2/84

Sir,

I wish to make several complaints about anomalies in the new fare structure that I have encountered recently. This is entirely apart from the fare increase from Sandringham to the city, which I find most crippling.

1. I am retired, not on a pension, but on a small fixed income. I do voluntary work in the city. If I travel to the city three times a week at \$3.50 a time, this is an enormous hole out of my weekly allowance. When I enquired about off-peak travel, I found that this has now been changed from 9.00 a.m. to 9.30 a.m. With a 30-minute train journey, *9.30 a.m. is too late* for an off-peak fare. People are still grumbling about it at Sandringham. All the workers have gone by 9.00 a.m.
2. There is no provision for fares for those who do not wish to use trams or buses.
3. Shortly after the introduction of the new fares, I found myself in the position of having a great load of shopping and two fretful grandchildren in tow. I tried to travel for *two stops* on the bus, but found that I had to pay the *whole fare to Mentone* from Sandringham station for self and 2 children. There is no provision for short journeys.
4. I have just been in Sydney where I travelled everywhere by public transport. For longer distances, the fares were much cheaper than in Melbourne, and there was more provision for short distance travel. [40 cents for two sections — Ed.]
5. Recently, when returning from the city, I waited at Flinders Street Station for the 3.44 p.m. train to Sandringham. There was obviously something wrong, as the train came in late and stayed a long time at the platform. Many announcements were made, and, on the crowded train, there was not one person who could understand a word. As half an hour went by and the train was obviously very late, people were debating whether to get out and telephone regarding late appointments, and some were contemplating getting trams to nearby areas, but in the absence of intelligible information, no one knew what to do. Eventually, on another platform we heard an announcement by an employee who was either Greek or Italian that there was a fault in the signalling equipment. This employee spoke very clearly and all could understand him. However, the announcements on Platform 10 were utterly unintelligible, and were made, I think, by an Australian employee. Surely it is not too much to ask that information regarding delays etc. be given clearly and punctually so that all travellers know what to expect.
6. At Richmond station there are not enough members of staff, and often one or more of the platforms are unmanned. As Sandringham is not yet connected to the Loop, it is

## LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS

necessary to change there. However, it is always impossible to find out which platform to go to for the next loop train, and one just has to guess.

What a great deal of work still has to be done to make our railways more efficient!

*— H. L. Elmore,  
Sandringham*

Sir,

I am writing to you in relation to a matter concerning what I consider to be a substantial service offered by V/LINE.

On Monday 11 June I had occasion to travel by rail from Numurkah to Melbourne. I booked and paid \$18.80 for a first-class seat on the train departing Numurkah at 3.46pm.

Incorporated in the train was a carriage equipped with a snack bar. However, the conductor informed me that despite the fact that the train was fully booked and carrying six carriages of passengers, the snack bar was not operational for this journey. Information regarding such lack of availability of refreshments was not offered to me at the time I booked or when I paid for my ticket.

At approximately 5.00 pm, as daylight began to fade, the conductor passed along the aisle telling us that the carriage was without electricity, and that we would have no lighting or air-conditioning for the remainder of our journey. As the train was fully booked, we could not be offered the opportunity to move to another illuminated and heated carriage.

Some half an hour later, the conductor again passed down the aisle, this time proffering the news that the toilet facilities of our carriage were not operational and would we please use those of adjacent carriages?

My first-class trip to Melbourne was now definitely of a standard less than second class.

The journey continued, the principal source of interest (since reading and like activities were now impossible) being that of watching people make their way along the aisle in almost total darkness, tripping over objects and other people as they progressed. Fortunately no-one was injured by such falls.

Earlier this year, I travelled by rail from Cobram to Melbourne. This day was very hot and the air-conditioning servicing my carriage was not operational. On this occasion, there were empty seats in other carriages and after repeated complaints by myself and fellow passengers, we were reseated in cooled carriages.

It was with interest that I read last week in Numurkah's local newspaper that the railway station at Numurkah was being modernized to provide comfortable waiting rooms for travellers and friends, and that local patronage of the rail service had increased markedly. Whilst I congratulate V/LINE on improvements to the service this far, I would suggest that provision of a rail service featuring reliable carriages would do much towards maintaining the trend of increasing rail patronage.

*Sue Sutherland,  
North Melbourne*

# TRAIN TALK

## ODD SPOT

The designers of Museum Station went to great lengths and expense to make it accessible to handicapped people – through the installation of ramps and even a lift – but built the platform 15cm lower than the floor level of trains. A special ramp has to be brought out to cope with wheelchairs.

A lass took the train on her first day in a new job – and spent 25 minutes on the viaduct between Spencer Street and Flinders Street Stations. (This was during the period following the introduction this year of Metrol, a computerized train describer system designed to improve train scheduling.)

O for the joys of reliable and punctual trains.

On Friday 17 February, the screens' displays at Museum Station entrance read "take tram to Flinders Street" for western lines. Your correspondent enquired if there was a train to Spencer Street. There *was*, insisted the attendant, at 6.08 pm.

The screen on Platform 1 read "Flinders Street". The 6.08 Flinders Street duly departed at 6.18 displaying "City Circle". The train stopped at – you guessed it – Princes Bridge Station, bypassing Flinders Street Station, and continued to Spencer Street as an Eltham train.

At the La Trobe & Elizabeth Street tram stop, an interstate visitor found his exit from a tram impeded by a car. But that didn't deter him – he walked "lightly" across the bonnet. To his chagrin, however, he found that the driver, a policeman – wasn't amused. (Age 11/2/84)

Three carriages of the tangerine series (country carriages known as 'N-sets') were vandalized in Bendigo Sheds.

One of the cars was unusable. Instead of detaching the car, thus leaving it for the Bendigo Workshops to repair, it was locked up and run to Melbourne along with the other two cars as part of a normal train, with passengers in the other two vandalised cars. (Newsrail, October 1983)

## Notes on the Introduction of the MET

### Surprise Ticket

One week after the introduction of the MET, we discovered that there is a Rail+2 ticket for 60¢ (half fare 30¢) for the inner neighbourhood only.

The ticket was not mentioned in the explanatory booklet.

### Explanatory Booklets

Distribution of explanatory booklets was inadequate. Museum Station did not have brochures on Monday, the second day of operation of the new system. Parkville residents did not receive brochures until Thursday night, 4 days after it started. Residents of other areas did not receive their brochures until the eve of the new system.

### On-the-job-training

Preparation and training of MTA rail and tram staff was inadequate, and the Government came under fire from transport unions. Museum Station, for example, did not receive the new tickets until the very day the system commenced. That's called on-the-job-training.

Tram conductors had to consult maps before selling some tickets.

## CONTRIBUTIONS

The TTA gladly welcomes articles, photographs, in fact anything of interest to Members, for inclusion in the Newsletter.

Planning a visit interstate? Overseas? Then let others know your impressions of other public transport systems.

Articles should preferably be typed double-spaced.

Handwritten material is still acceptable provided it is legible, but still preferably double-spaced.

**Deadlines:** Material should be sent to the Editor as soon as it is prepared. The closing date for material is the middle of the month preceding the month of issue. The closing date for the next issue is 15th August. But please try to avoid starting your contribution on 14th Aug., as that can cause a mad scramble for the Editor.

Please send your articles to the Editor, TTA Newsletter, [redacted], Ormond 3163.

## LOS ANGELES TO SAN DIEGO – VIA AMTRAK

One of the reasons that we had visited the USA was to attend a convention at San Diego. Our last port of call prior to San Diego was Los Angeles and we were presented with three methods of reaching there – flying, motor coach or train.

I naturally opted for the last, and initially had cause to regret it. One area where air travel scores is by relieving the traveller of his baggage. By the time we finally reached the "San Diegan", both my wife and I were literally exhausted.

We had to queue for tickets at Union Station (Los Angeles) for some time, which oddly I found heartening. It was no great imposition, as I queued and my wife waited with our cases, while I pondered on the popularity of the Amtrak service in this city that had been sold so completely to the motor car.

We then had to queue before Door "H" for about 15 minutes – again no imposition – but it was when Door "H" opened and the passengers streamed through that our ordeal began.

Each carrying two heavy cases, we struggled through the doorway and saw to our horror that the line of passengers was moving at a fair pace along a lengthy passageway. It was also a hot day – in the 90s – and the sweat poured off us as we dragged and half-carried our cases, our muscles creaking. We were rather like two stones in a fast-moving river, other passengers less-loaded streamed past us. We were near breaking point as we reached a ramp that inclined upwards. We laboured up that and had blessed relief half-way up as the queue banked up. Thereafter we inched forward; the train drew in, and we had to stagger alongside the train and climb aboard.

Being America, there were no platforms, so we had to lift our cases up the coach steps into the train. My muscles gave up at this point, so I had to climb in and drag the cases after me.

We found two seats on each side of the aisle and sank down. My heart was thumping like a steam hammer and I was a ball of sweat. I thought wistfully of air travel, where one's luggage is sent on via conveyor belts. My wife's comment "I can see why people travel by air or bus" did not help my temper – I felt out of sorts and betrayed.

The train backed slowly out of Union Station, reached the main line and then began to move forwards. We ambled slowly through the Los Angeles suburbs and then began to put on speed. For the first time my spirits rose, as did my wife's when I offered to go and fetch some fruit juice and Danish pastries from the refreshment car.

The trip was smooth and pleasant, the seats were comfortable, while the train moved fast. It had one or two stops – at Anaheim and Santa Ana – before it emerged on the shoreline and veered south alongside the Pacific Ocean. It was an impressive sight. We moved through seaside towns that resembled Rosebud or Sorrento. At one of them the station was at the landward end of the pier.

As we moved towards San Diego, I began to read my Los Angeles Times, and there I found an item that raised my spirits. The plans for the Rapid Transit District had been approved. The Lord Mayor of Los Angeles wanted a start made both at the Union Station end of the line and at North Hollywood. At last the possibility of a Los Angeles Metro was becoming a reality. The citadel of the motor car had at last capitulated, endless freeways for the auto merely increasing the traffic jams instead of relieving them.

As we disembarked at San Diego, I found it was easier to get the cases off than on, the force of gravity being a great ally. As we headed for the hotel by taxi, I caught a glimpse of the San Diego Trolley and vowed that that would be my next objective.

All in all a good trip from Los Angeles to San Diego, but will somebody PLEASE supply luggage trolleys at Union Station, or a conveyor system for those with heavy baggage. That laboured walk to the train from Door "H" must rank as one of the worst ordeals of my life.

– Ray Scott  
Frankston

[Perhaps Mr Scott might invest in his own set of wheels – luggage wheels – for his next trip – Ed.]

## THE GLAMOUR OF STEAM STILL LIVES

To many rail buffs, the only charm and attraction of rail travel went with the phasing out of steam locomotives and their replacement with diesel and electric ones. Many still regard steam locomotives as the only proper motive power.

Steam, however, had its drawbacks — its low thermal efficiency, its labour intensiveness and its dirtiness.

In the two countries that still rely heavily on steam, namely, South Africa and China, the railways have countered these shortcomings. Both countries have ample coal supplies and little or no oil to make it economical to use diesel fuels for rail locomotives. China actually began seriously to build steam locomotives long after the rest of the world had stopped [building them]. Production still continues at a rate of one locomotive per working day. China has in use the QJ class at 4,000 strong, the largest class of locomotive in the world of whatever type of propulsion. It also has one-fifth of all the steam locomotives in the world.

A number of methods was used to overcome the drawbacks of steam locomotives.

► Fuel costs were reduced by the use of cheap fuel, namely coal. In some countries, oil costs four and more times the cost of coal for the same heat content, and this more than cancels out the better efficiency of diesel compared to steam.

► Low thermal efficiency was countered by improved burning and a more efficient engine. The amount of fuel wasted by a steam locomotive can be reduced by relatively small improvements, and since the dirt connected with steam operation represents waste, less waste automatically means less pollution.

These changes were brought about in the method of burning coal, which is now gasified before being burnt. With this technique, less than half the air needed for combustion enters the firebox through the firebox itself; the amount of reduction being set by smaller and exactly calculated openings between the bars of the grate. This eliminates waste by eliminating fire-throwing when the locomotive is working hard. Steam, from the auxiliaries and from the exhaust side of the main cylinders, is also fed into the hot firebed from the sides. It reacts chemically with the hot coal to produce cleanly combustible water gas, while the reaction is one that absorbs rather than produces heat. The temperature of the firebed does not reach a level at which clinker forms through fusion of the coal. The air that passes through the hot firebed makes producer gas, and this mixture of gases burns cleanly, using the air entering through openings in the side of the firebox.

The existing mechanical stoker is retained, the hard labour of running steam power is reduced, when putting the fuel in and when taking the residues out.

Other improvements include increased superheat with consequent improved cylinder lubrication, better draughting and feed-water heater, all contributing to better in thermal efficiency.

The avoidance of unburnt fuel in the residues of combustion gives the startling result of 1/3 less fuel burnt for a given output. Maximum power output is increased while both the quantity and the difficulty of disposal of the residues is greatly reduced.

The result is a steam locomotive that can match its diesel counterpart in respect of such important matters as availability and cleanliness, and which scores over the diesel when it comes to fuel costs.

— Ken McIntyre

## VIA RAIL CANADA BETTERS ITS FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE IN 1983

The annual report of VIA RAIL Canada for 1983, a copy of which the TTA received in April, reveals that it has bettered its predicted financial performance by \$93 million over the previous year, without reductions in service.

Against an estimated government approved operating grant of \$517.3 million for the year, only \$451.2 million was required — an increase of 4.5% on the previous year, or less than the rate of inflation.

Like our Victorian rail system, the rail passenger service that Canadians own today is a legacy of decades of decline and disincentives. They are now facing the problems of modernising a national rail system, which is costly and complex, and involves long lead times. VIA RAIL still feels that lack of infusion of considerable capital is preventing it from offering optimum service levels to the travelling public.

Some highlights of the speech of Pierre A. H. Franche, President and Chief Executive Officer of VIA RAIL, in presenting the annual report were:

- \* “Canadians strongly support VIA, even though they may be impatient with present shortcomings in our service. In fact they strongly favour an improved passenger rail system and the very considerable expenditure needed to reach an appropriate level of service to satisfy the customers of passenger rail.”
- \* “VIA’s ongoing challenge: better, modern service at the least cost to the public purse.”
- \* “We are making serious attempts to lure people away from the most common form of transportation — the private automobile.”
- \* “VIA’s commitment to improving customer services doesn’t end with better equipment — in fact it begins with our employees. That is a central theme at VIA today. The customer service program will generate a renewed feeling of pride and involvement among employees.”

All these quotations have a relevance and considerable bearing on Victoria’s rail system.

*The VIA RAIL 1983 year at a glance:*

	1983	1982
Passenger revenue	\$173.325M	\$161.994M
Total revenue	\$645.713M	\$610.580M
Capital expenditure	\$134.700M	\$114.115M
Total passengers carried	6,734,000	7,223,000

Congratulations VIA Rail — on a year’s good performance.

— Ken McIntyre

## THE ‘MET’ IS ONE YEAR OLD

In a television appearance on the first of July, the chairman of the MTA, Mr Lynn Strouse, said that the MTA is “doing it right”.

In the first twelve months of operation of the MTA, more passengers have been moved (by rail, tram and bus) than in the previous 12 months’ operation when separate authorities (MMTB, VicRail, private bus) operated the services, he said. (And the year 1982/3 saw a 5% increase in patronage over the previous year 1981/2.)

Glimpsing into the future, he said we were likely to see new centres in which “train, bus and taxi facilities were conveniently located under the one roof”.



## TTA MEMBERSHIP

The TTA is a voluntary, non-party political, non-profit organization of public transport users.

Its function is to lobby the Government for a modern, adequate, efficient public transport system. Our plan for improved public transport calls for optimum use of trains, trams and buses in the interests of our scarce fuel resources, and protection of the environment. It also calls for the incorporation of the advantages of the various modes of transport in the most cost-efficient and energy-efficient manner.

The membership includes regular issues of the Newsletter for the basic subscription of \$5 annually. A concession membership is available for \$3 annually. Those who can afford to are requested to become Donor Members at \$10 per year, or to make donations towards the costs of printing, postage, hire of halls for meetings, etc. All members have equal status and their category of membership may be changed when subscriptions are renewed.

Regular TTA activities consist of monthly meetings of the TTA Council to which all members are invited. The Council meets on the first Wednesday of each month (except January) at the Presbyterian Assembly Hall, 2nd Floor, 156 Collins Street Melbourne at 5.00pm. (Just down from Russel Street)

Other TTA functions include the preparation of briefs and submissions; liaison with railway managers through regular meetings; representations to the Premier and Transport Minister on suggestions, complaints, etc; media interviews; speeches at public meetings; articles and letters to the press; publishing and distribution of leaflets.

## NEWSLETTER

The TTA Newsletter is published by and for members of the Train Travellers' Association.

Members are encouraged to contribute articles to the Newsletter and to offer suggestions and ideas to the Council for consideration.

Address all correspondence to The Secretary, TTA, ■ ■ ■ Ormond. Tel. ■ ■ ■ ■

## OFFICE-BEARERS FOR 1983-4

### President:

Dr Charles Sowerwine ■ ■ ■ ■

### Vice-President

Ivan Powell ■ ■ ■ ■

### Secretary

Ken McIntyre ■ ■ ■ ■

### Treasurer

David Bowd ■ ■ ■ ■

### Public Relations

Patrick O'Connor ■ ■ ■ ■

### Council

- John Alexopoulos . . . . . ■ ■ ■ ■
- Alex Boyne . . . . . ■ ■ ■ ■
- Rod Bryant . . . . . ■ ■ ■ ■
- Barry Gray . . . . . ■ ■ ■ ■
- Rob Murphy . . . . . ■ ■ ■ ■
- Chris McConville . . . . . ■ ■ ■ ■
- Doreen Parker . . . . . ■ ■ ■ ■
- Dr Doug Sherman . . . . . ■ ■ ■ ■
- Robin Vowels . . . . . ■ ■ ■ ■
- Ray Walford . . . . . ■ ■ ■ ■

after hours

## Comedy Capers by Rail

1. *Strange announcements heard over the P.A. system at rail stations recently . . .*

### At Flinders Street Station:

"The 5.14pm train to Ringwood is cancelled due to a shortage of defective trains."(!)

"We apologise for the delay and cancellation of trains, due to guard congestion at Flinders Street."

(Lung, throat, nasal congestion in guards?)

### Richmond:

Travellers in a blue Harris train to the city at about 8.41am on 3/2/84 at Richmond Platform No. 6, were surprised to hear the announcement that "the next train to ALBURY will leave from Platform 6".

### 2. VicWail:

The interminable escalators at Parliament Station have been slowed to one-third speed on the orders of the Department of Labor and Industry.

The Met claims it follows complaints from terrified elderly ladies.

It denies suggestions that the escalators have merely been adjusted to match the rest of the service. (Herald)

## MTA NIGGARDLY OVER POLICE BAND CONCERT TRANSPORT ARRANGEMENTS

The MTA attempted to muscle the organizers of the Police Band concert - held at the Showgrounds - for funds to put on extra transport services.

They wouldn't wear it.

As if in spite, the MTA arranged one extra train and 20 buses to move a record 50,000 fans. And the train didn't even call in at the Showgrounds - the nearest station was Ascot Vale.

This must surely be negative thinking at its best. The extra revenue gained from those fans would pay extra staff costs many times over. Furthermore, the remainder of the system would be used somewhat efficiently at a time when it would be scarcely used at all.

Who could blame those fans if the next time they decided to go by car?

Sometimes you have to spend a penny to make a penny. Only in this case, you could make a few bucks.

## NOTICE OF MOTION

### CHANGE OF CONSTITUTION AND NAME

At the Annual General Meeting, the following motion will be moved by Dr Douglas Sherman and will be seconded by Mr Ken McIntyre:

“That Section 1 of the Constitution of the Train Travellers’ Association be replaced by the words given below under the heading “Proposed New Section 1”, and further that wherever the the initials “TTA” appear in the Constitution they be replaced by the word “Association”.”

#### Existing Section 1.

##### 1. Name

The name of the Association shall be the Train Travellers’ Association of Victoria, hereinafter referred to as the TTA.

#### Proposed New Section 1

##### 1. Name

The name of the Association shall be the Public Transport Association, hereinafter referred to as the Association.

At the same meeting, the following Amendment to the abovementioned motion will be moved by Mr Patrick O’Connor, and will be seconded by Mr Robin Vowels:

“That the name of the Association referred to in the Proposed New Section 1 be “Public Transport Users’ Association”.”

Ken McIntyre,  
Secretary

How do you feel about the way public transport is going?

This being an election year in that a state election must be held within the next twelve months and probably will be held before next April, come to the Annual General Meeting and make your opinions known.

This meeting could also be a milestone in the TTA’s history. The very important question of a new name for the Association is to be discussed and voted upon. As the recent survey showed, the vote was very close between the front runners of the contenders for this.

Motions to adopt a new name have been framed in such a way as to leave the final choice to you. Be there and seal it.

Dear Member,

The year 1984/5 will be important for public transport and the TTA as we all will be facing a State election in 1985. With the betrayal of its major transport policies on which it was elected, the State Government has betrayed the trust and support that public transport users placed in it. More damage is in the pipeline, and it is imperative that your Association is made stronger with a greater number of members, and more funds to persuade the Government to protect and advance the interests of public transport users.

We call upon your continued support and request that you attend the Annual General Meeting.

Ken McIntyre,  
Secretary

**NOTICE OF MEETING**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The Annual General Meeting of the Train Travellers' Association will be held on Wednesday 18th July at 5.30p.m. in the BANQUET ROOM of the Victoria Hotel, 215 Little Collins Street Melbourne (between Swanston & Russell Streets).

A distinguished guest speaker has been invited to address the meeting.

After the Speaker's address, questions will be invited from the floor.

Subsequently, at about 6.30 p.m., the formal business of the Association will be conducted, which includes the election of Office Bearers and presentation of Annual Reports. A motion to change the name of the Association will also be put, and should ensure some animated discussion.

Ken McIntyre,  
Secretary

The TTA functions through the efforts of willing members on the Council. If you feel you have something to contribute, please consider nominating for one of the office bearer or for one of the Council Member positions. (All these positions will be declared vacant.)

Your nomination in writing must reach the Secretary on or before Wednesday 4th July 1984.

Please use the tear-off slip to nominate candidates for office in the TTA for 1984/85:

I,....., of (address)  
..... hereby nominate  
..... for the position of  
..... at the election of office bearers for the TTA  
for 1984/5.

Signed: .....

Date: .....