



# The Tramways of Geelong

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A LATE START AND AN  
EARLY FINISH

# Beginnings



- ❖ From 1878, when Adelaide built the first permanent street tramway, there was a boom in replacing horse drawn omnibuses with horse drawn trams – and later with various forms of mechanically powered trams.
- ❖ Geelong was a late starter – 34 years after Adelaide and 27 years after Melbourne.
- ❖ Geelong was the last city in Australia to build its first tramway during that tramway boom.
- ❖ The next city to open its first tramway was Gold Coast – 102 years later!

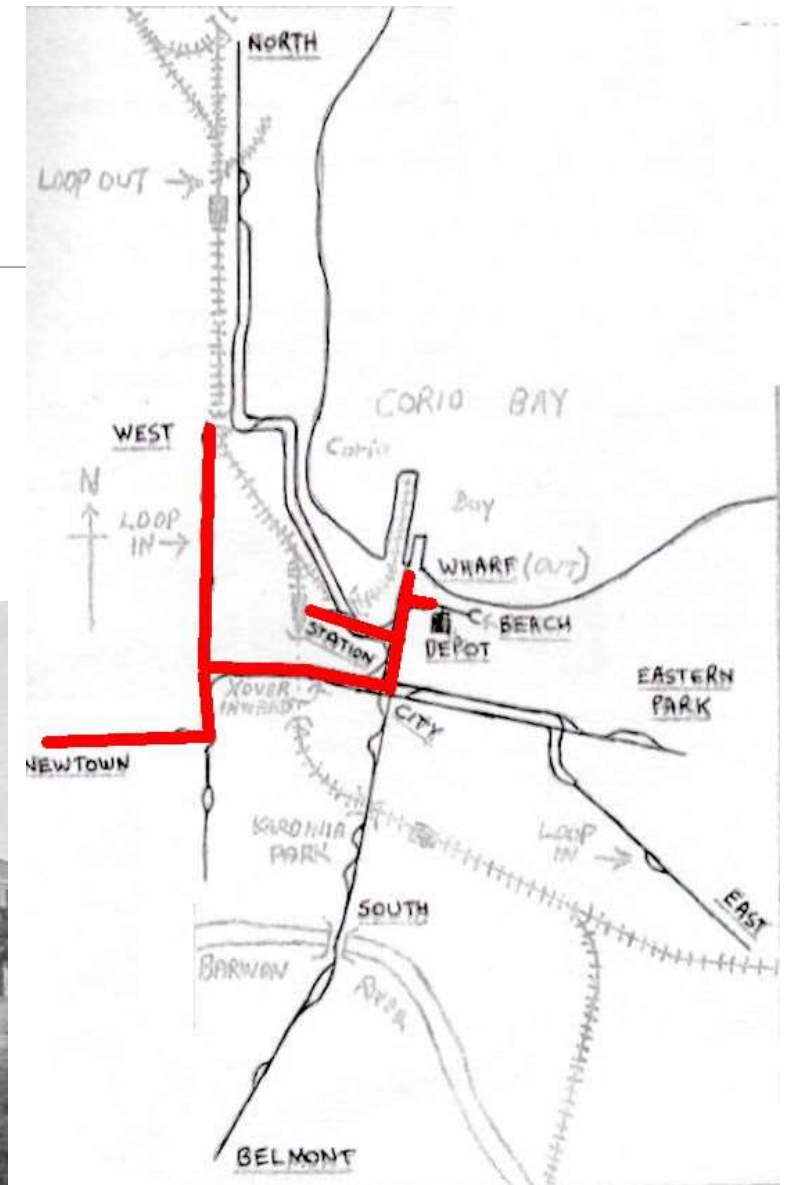
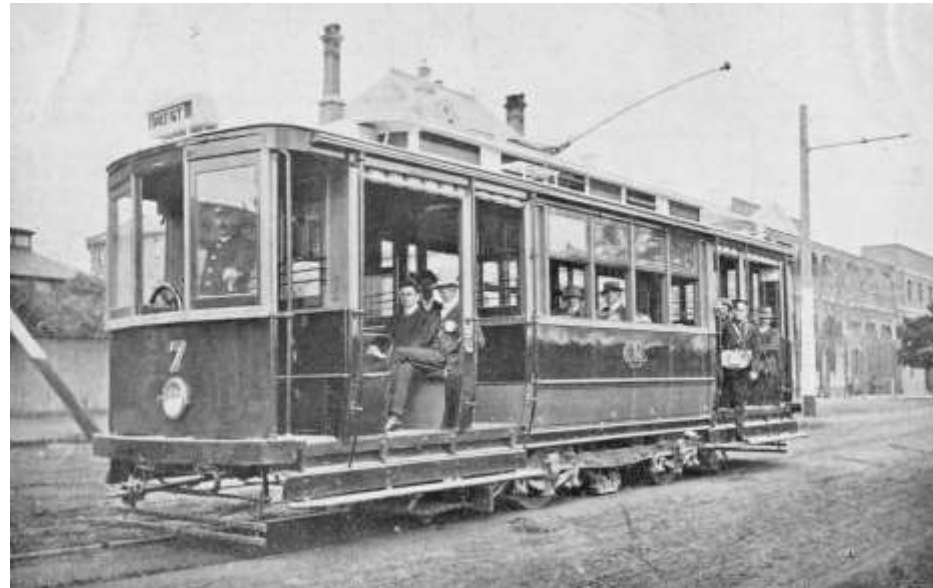


1885	Melbourne cable
1886	
1887	Ballarat horse
1888	
1889	
1890	Bendigo battery then steam
1891	
1892	
1893	
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1895	
1896	
1897	
1898	
1899	
1900	
1901	
1902	
1903	Bendigo electric
1904	
1905	Ballarat electric
1906	Melbourne electric
1907	
1908	
1909	
1910	
1911	
1912	Geelong electric



# At last!

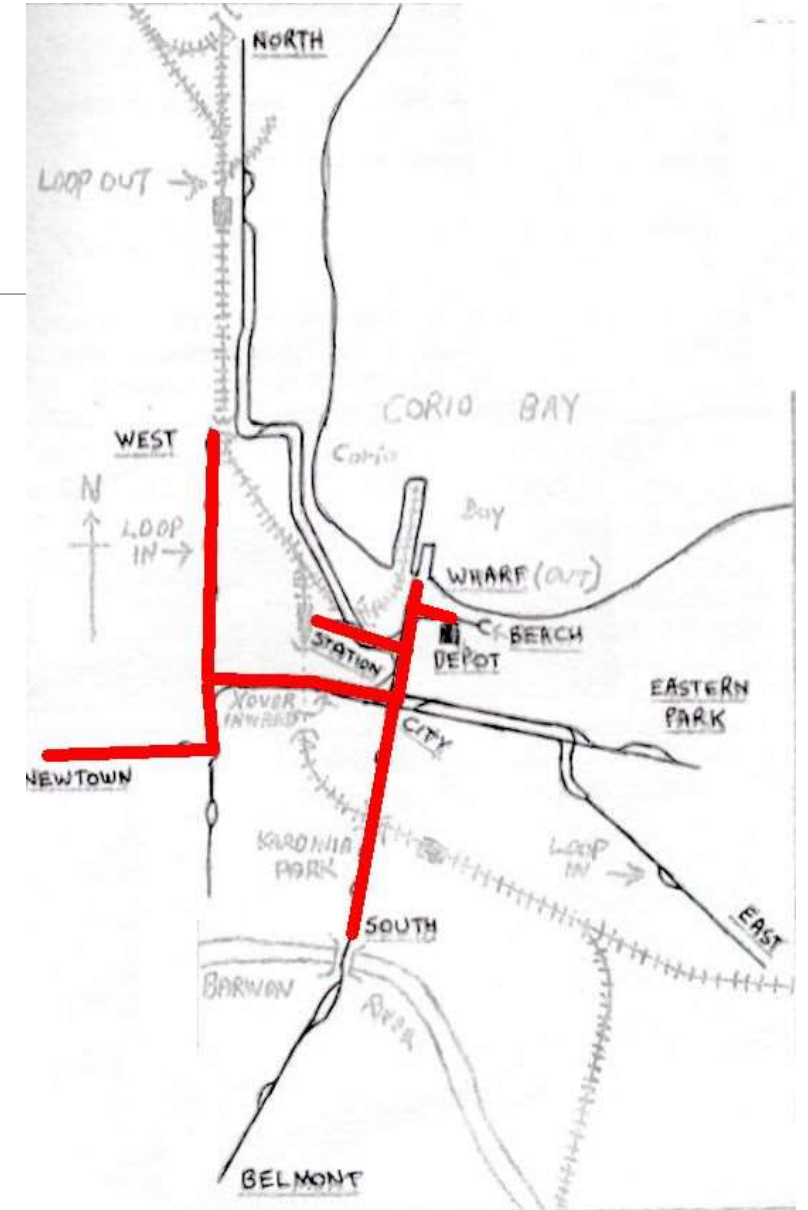
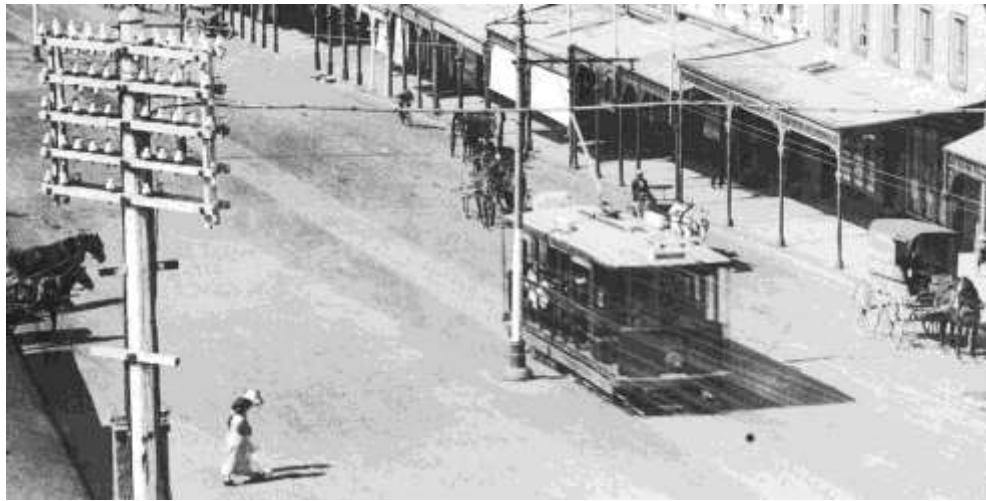
- ❖ Geelong finally could call itself a real city when the electric trams started running on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> of March, 1912.
- ❖ The initial routes connected West Geelong and Newtown with the two key transport hubs of Geelong – the railway station and the wharf.
- ❖ 7 trams and 4 trailers were supplied by Duncan & Fraser of Adelaide to open the service.





# An early extension

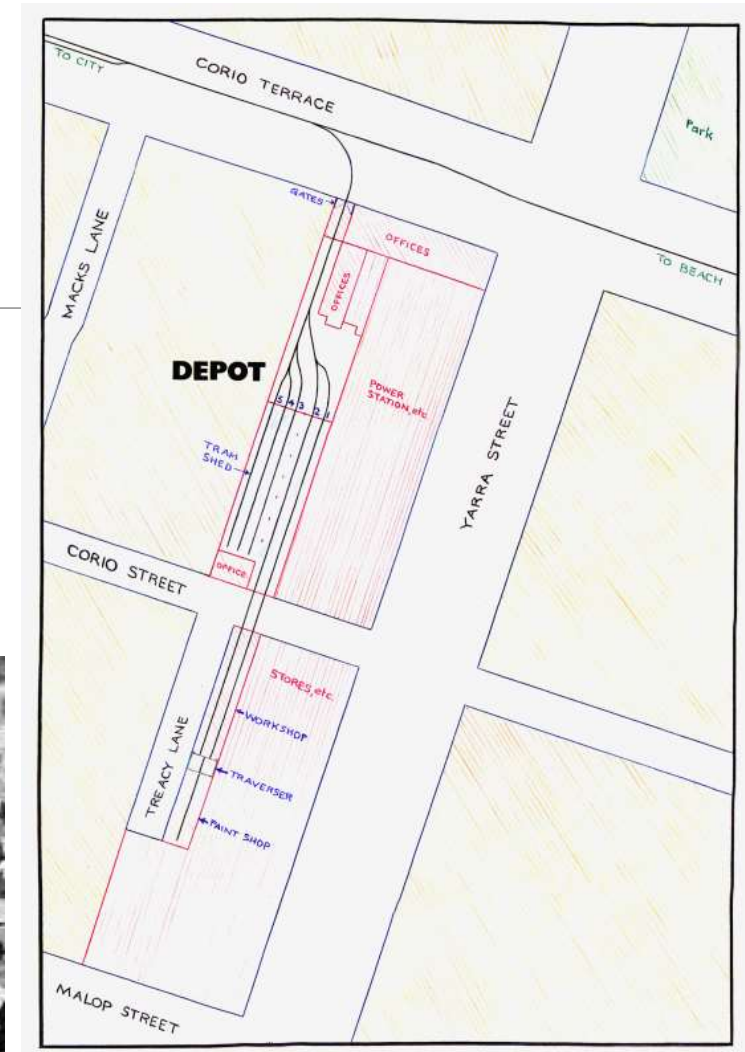
- ❖ During 1913 an extension down Moorabool St to the Barwon River was opened. It had been planned all along but delayed until completion of negotiations with the Victorian Railways about a viaduct to carry the railway over the road.
- ❖ 3 more trams of the same design were delivered from Duncan & Fraser and two of the original trailers were converted to small trams to serve growing patronage.
- ❖ Some early motor buses were also used to serve East Geelong.





# The Depot

- ❖ The tram depot was squeezed in beside the Melbourne Electric Supply Company's power station site.
- ❖ A workshop behind the depot was added in 1931.



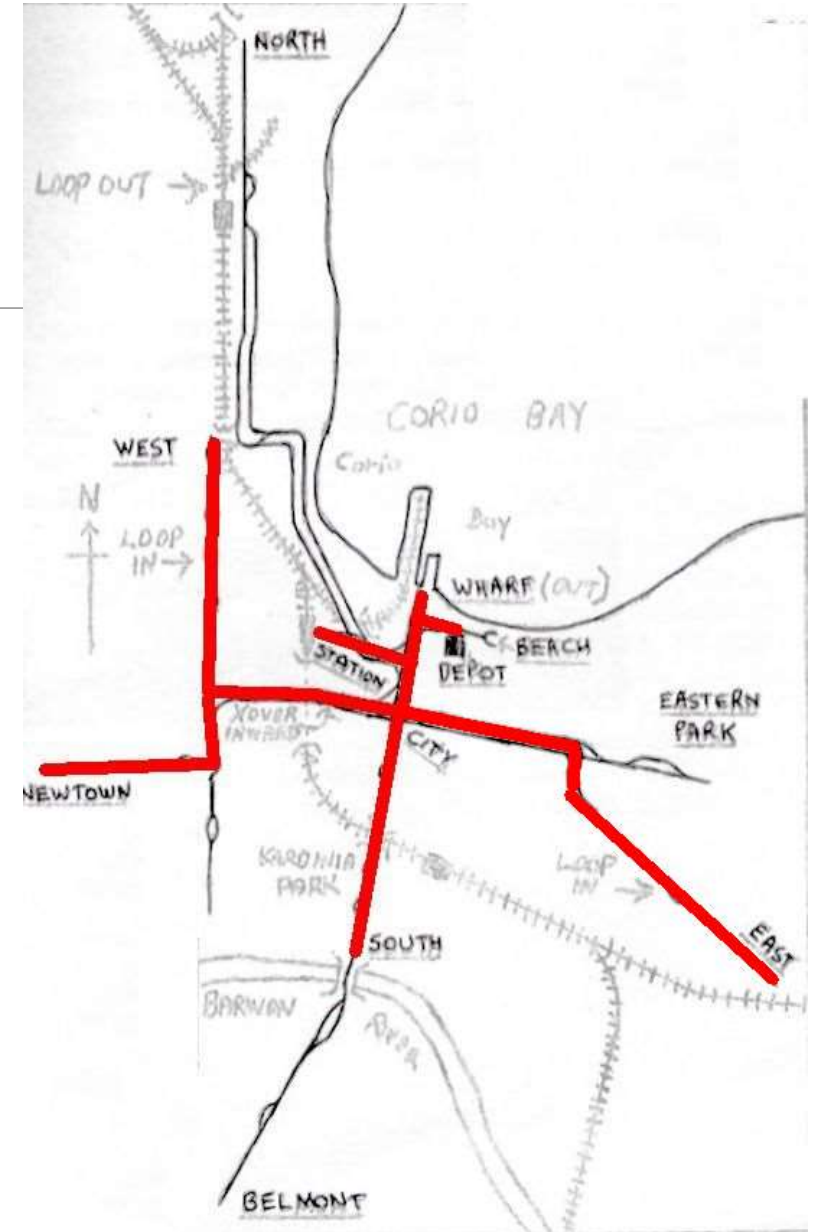
❖ Plan courtesy of Andrew Cook



# Going East



- ❖ World War 1 saw little change in the Geelong tramways, but by 1922-24 extensions and new trams were back on the agenda.
- ❖ A line was built in stages to serve the eastern side of the city and the unpopular buses were retired.
- ❖ Two new all steel 'Birney Safety Cars' were imported from the US and numbered 14 and 15.



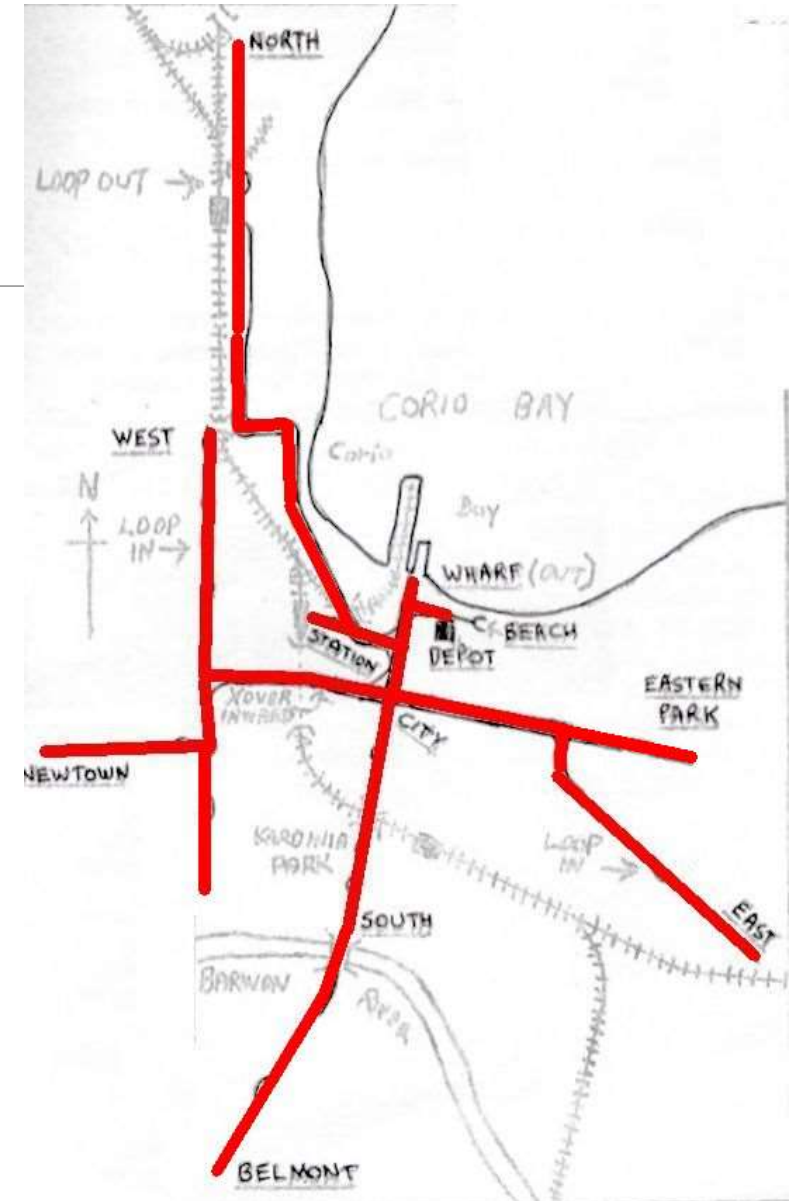
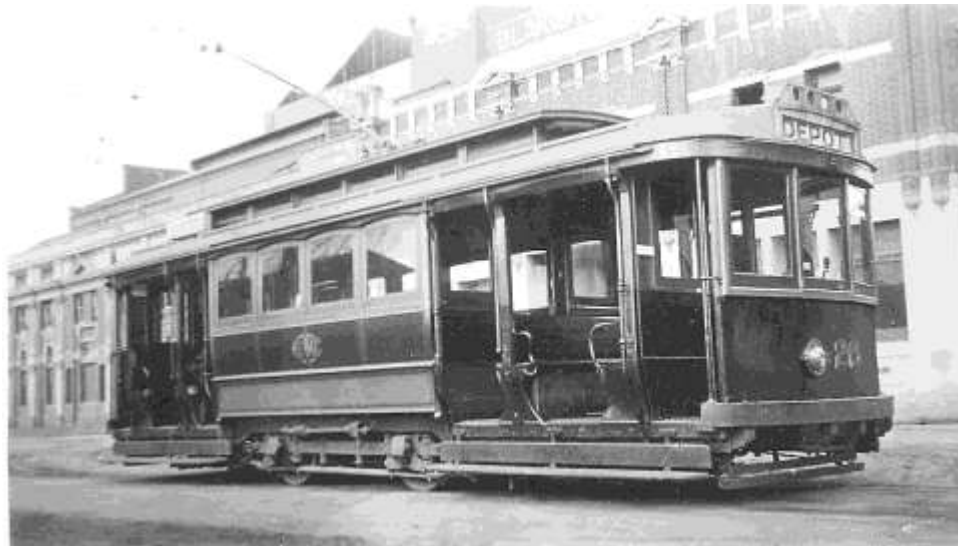
# Bigger trams

- ❖ Route extensions and growing patronage required more trams.
- ❖ In 1925 eight new large trams were imported from the Adelaide tram builder Pengelley and Co.
- ❖ Geelong's former preferred builder, Duncan and Fraser had decided to get out of tram building and focus on building motor car bodies for Ford Motor Co. That proved to be a disaster for the company which was wound up in 1927 – not long after Ford Motor Co started mass production in Geelong.
- ❖ The Pengelley trams were very large 'single truck' trams but lacked the capacity of bogie trams being built for most other operators at the time.



# More extensions

- ❖ During 1928 a series of substantial extensions were opened in stages:
  - ❖ The South route was extended across the Barwon River to Belmont.
  - ❖ The tramway to Newtown had a branch line built south along Pakington St to Chilwell.
  - ❖ A new route was built from the city to North Geelong on the other side of the railway to the West Geelong tram route.
- ❖ To serve these routes 7 second hand trams from Melbourne were purchased and placed in service.
- ❖ In 1930 a new branch off the East route was built to Eastern Park





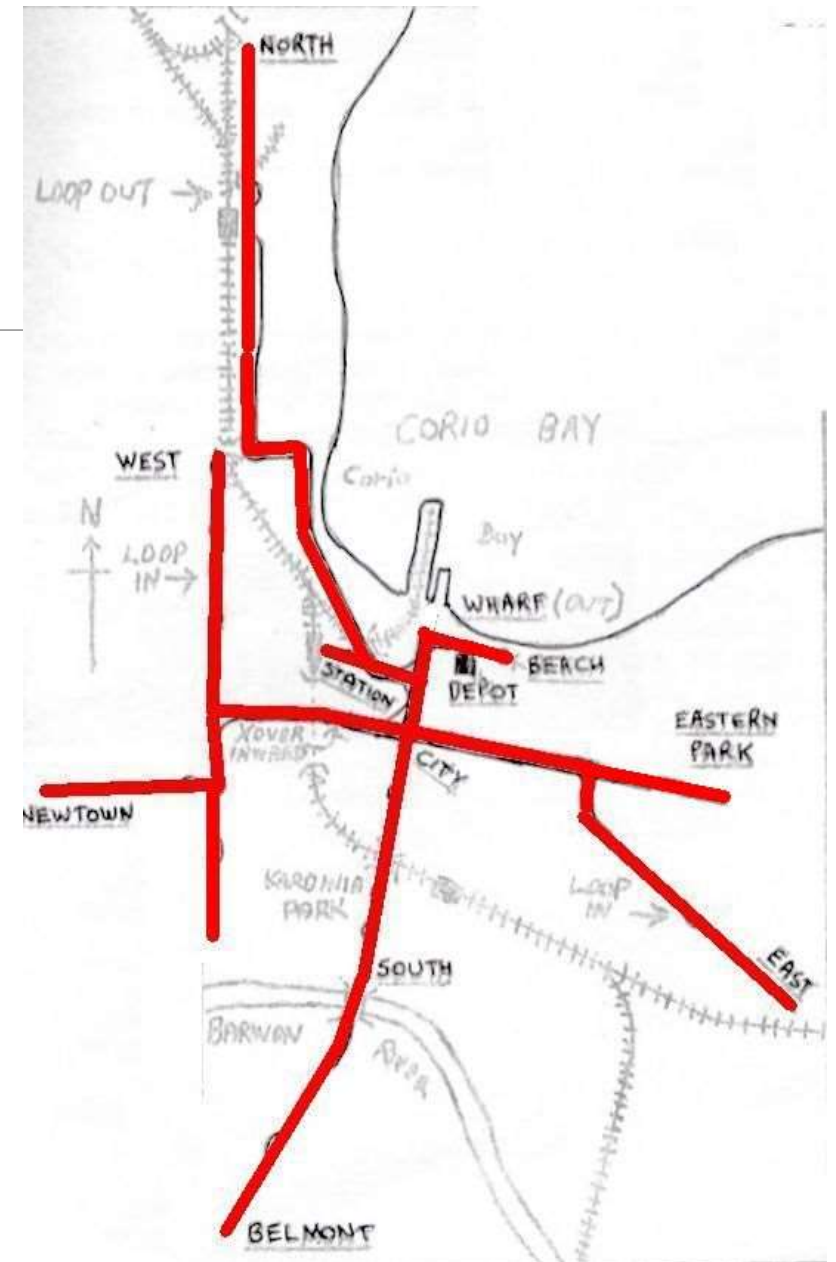
# Takeover – and more Birneys

- ❖ The State Electricity Commission of Victoria had been formed in the 1920s to take over electricity generation and supply in the State.
- ❖ They didn't want to run trams, but no-one else wanted the trams as a separate entity so the SEC took over tram operation in Geelong in 1930.
- ❖ In 1935, the SEC purchased 4 second hand Birney Safety cars made redundant after the closure of the Port Adelaide tram system.
- ❖ Three of the ex Melbourne single truck trams were transferred to Ballarat to make room for the Birneys and meet an urgent need for trams in Ballarat –also run by the SEC.



# The final extension

- ❖ By 1940 the traffic from the Wharf line was negligible, so the short line was closed.
- ❖ A short extension was constructed along Brougham St to serve Eastern Beach.
- ❖ Pic at right shows the Geelong track cleaner tram entering Brougham St just before the Wharf line was removed.



# More second hand trams

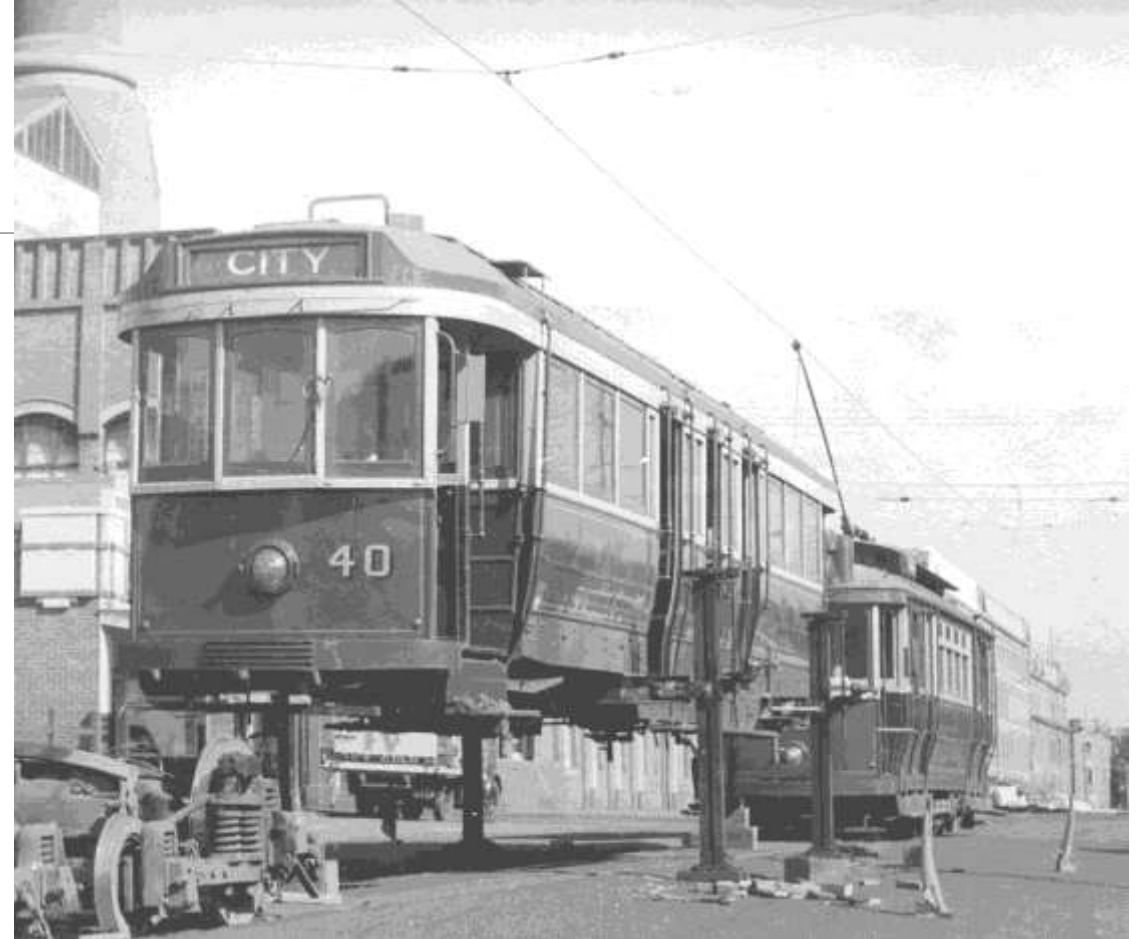
- ❖ Once World War 2 was over second hand Melbourne bogie trams dating from 1913 to 1917 became available for re-use.
- ❖ Geelong bought 10 of these trams and put them into service between 1947 and 1951.
- ❖ This freed up the six Birney trams which were transferred to Bendigo





# Closure

- ❖ By the 1950s, trams were seen as “out of date” and the SEC had no great problems in abandoning the Geelong trams in favour of buses on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March, 1956 after just under 44 years of operation.
- ❖ The only trams built for Geelong to survive were the two original Birneys.
- ❖ Many of the ex-Melbourne trams were transferred to Ballarat and Bendigo where they saw service for another 15 years.
- ❖ Several still run in museum service in Ballarat and Bendigo



# But wait

... one original Geelong tram has been rescued and runs again!

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