

## Melbourne tram driver Richard Augustus loves the sense of community his job brings

ABC Radio Melbourne / By Matilda Marozzi

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Richard Augustus started working as a tram conductor in 1992 but says "everyone wanted to be a driver". (ABC News: Matilda Marozzi)

Walking up to the Malvern tram depot, three men can be seen standing at the entrance wearing high-vis — one of them is Richard Augustus.

It is cold, windy and the clouds loom threateningly overhead, but Mr Augustus's face is lit with a warm smile — it is the same smile that has been greeting Melbourne tram passengers for more than 30 years.

"I love driving trams," he told ABC Radio Melbourne's [Drive program](#).

While Mr Augustus's job has remained pretty much the same since the early 1990s, in contrast Melbourne has changed around him.



Richard Augustus is among these graduates of the Hawthorn Training School in 1992. (Supplied: Richard Augustus)

He regularly drives on Swanston Street, the busiest tram corridor in the world.

Over the years Mr Augustus has watched the street transform outside his tram window, including the construction of Melbourne Central shopping centre, accessible tram stops and now the suburban rail loop.

"The city has got busier and more alive and more vibrant," he said.

"We're very pleased we are playing a big role in getting people to and from the city."

## **A job for life**

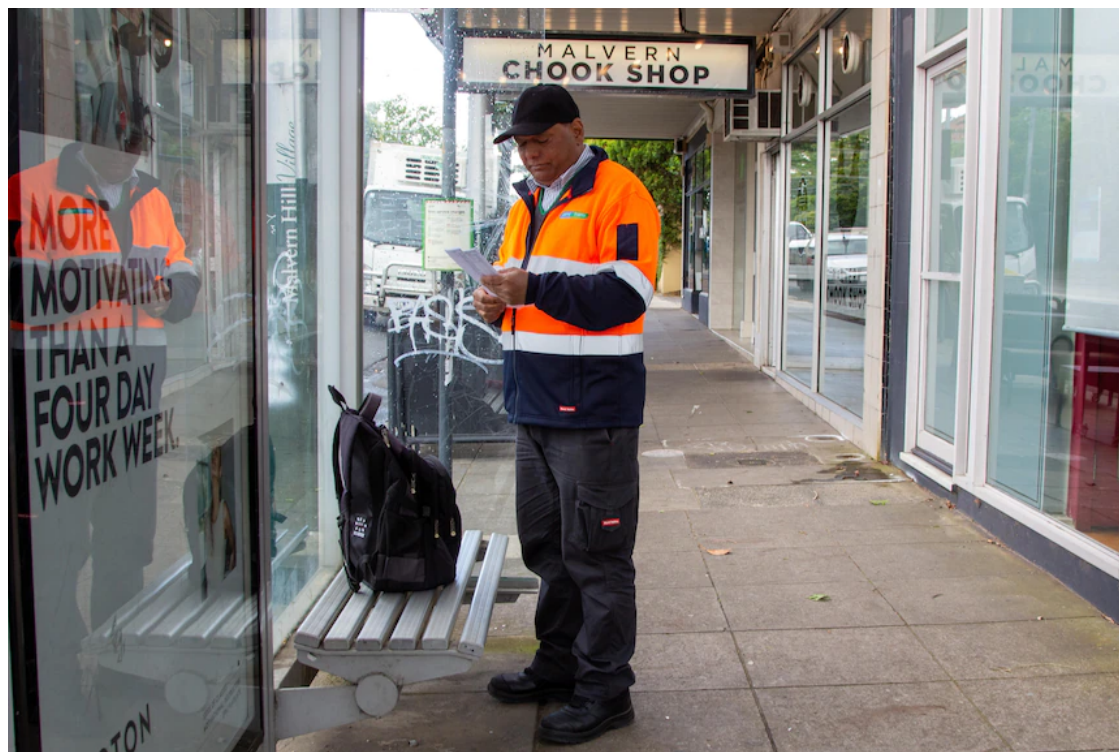
Mr Augustus migrated to Australia from India in 1989. At first, he worked for a supermarket and then at Ford.

He was looking for a more stable career and so on February 24, 1992 he joined the tram network as a conductor.

Six months earlier one of his older brothers had started working for the tramways and several people from his family followed.

Mr Augustus now has two older brothers, a sister-in-law, brother-in-law and a cousin all working different jobs with the trams.

"It's a job for life," he said.



Mr Augustus enjoys the sense of community his job brings. (ABC News: Matilda Marozzi)

Today in the Malvern depot mess hall, there are dozens of workers eating lunch and the atmosphere is jovial.

Mr Augustus seems to know everybody and is warmly greeted by colleagues.

At least four of them started around the same time as Mr Augustus and said they had stayed because of the good working conditions and job security.

## **Part of the community**

While Mr Augustus enjoys the flexibility of shift work and being out on the road, the main reason he loves his job is the sense of community.

"Over the years a lot of passengers have got to know me by name, and we know them by name because they are the regulars," he said.

"We know if they are waiting on Swanston walk for the number six tram, that this person wants to go there."





Mr Augustus unlocks the door of the tram, ready to start his shift for the day. (ABC News: *Matilda Marozzi*)

As well as driving trams up and down Swanston Street, Mr Augustus spends a lot of time in Melbourne's south-east, including taking kids to school.

Just a few weeks ago a young man and his family got on Mr Augustus's tram and asked, "Do you remember me?"

"He said, 'Richard, you used to take me to school when I was a kid'," Mr Augustus said.

Now the young man was bringing his wife and baby onto the same tram route he took when he was a schoolboy, to be greeted by the same driver.

"That was nice," Mr Augustus said.

The driver had another memorable interaction with his passengers when he was on the evening shift.

He said a group of girls got on the tram and asked him to drop them off at Tooronga Road for pizza.

The weather was not great, so they asked Mr Augustus when his tram would be back – they did not want to miss it.

"I said, 'Don't worry, in 15 minutes I'll be back there'," he said.

"When I came they are all waiting there – I opened the tram door and they give me a pizza."



Mr Augustus in the driving seat of a Z-class tram at the Malvern tram depot. (ABC News: Matilda Marozzi)

While his job is harder now due to increased traffic, Mr Augustus sees no reason to finish working anytime soon.

"I haven't got a chance to drive the new E-class tram yet — you know, the big new one which says 'Made in Melbourne for Melbourne'," he said.

"I would love to drive that tram."

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