

MELBOURNE TRAMWAYS BAND

TRAMWAYS BAND BACK ON TRACK

The name Melbourne Tramways Band is once again synonymous with Melbourne's public transport infrastructure following the recent approval from the Minister for Transport, for the Band to return to its proper name after being known as the 'Melbourne Transit Band' over recent years. The Band was required to accept the change in name in 1986 following the reorganisation of Victoria's transport infrastructure to form the Metropolitan Transit Authority.

Originally formed in 1888, as the 'Melbourne Tramways Employees Band' in the days of the city's cable cars, the name was lost for many years following the amalgamation of the various tramway trusts in 1920 to become the Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board. The band was re-established by the employees as the Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Band in 1938 and once again became well known throughout the community for its public performances, particularly its monthly recitals at Wattle Park that have continued for over sixty years.

Although there are still a number of retired tramway employees in our ranks, we currently only have one serving employee playing in the band. Mindful of our origins, we are very keen to attract current tramway staff to join and seek the co-operation of the Tramway Union in encouraging new members and advertising our presence. All of the band's Trustees and the bulk of our life members are former tramway men, but they are all getting older and we believe it is vital to retain the strong connection with the service to maintain our unique and proud heritage.

The Tramways Band now presents two major ensembles: the original brass band and our stage band 'Transition'. Due mainly to our regular concert commitments, the band's emphasis is on entertaining rather than contesting and we present a wide range of music from classical to swing and of course marches at appropriate occasions.

The band has regularly participated in Anzac Day parades, lead tram cavalcades and Moomba parades through the city, performed at civic receptions and a range of other ceremonial events. In 1998, the band paid its own way to Thailand to take part in the opening of the Commonwealth Government's Memorial at Hellfire Pass on the Thai-Burma railway and to play at a range of Anzac Commemoration services, including the Anzac Day Dawn Service in Hellfire Pass itself.

The band was based at the old Hawthorn Tramways Depot for the past thirty years where a substantial amount of memorabilia has been gathered. With that site now sold and cleared the band is currently seeking a new long term home. Ideally, we would prefer to be located in an active tramway depot so that we can strengthen our links with members of the service.

For further information on the Band and its activities, please feel free to contact me by telephone on: 9755 1475 or fax: 9755 1090.


Ed Bright
Hon. Secretary



THE TRAMWAYS' BAND.—(FROM A PHOTO BY MR. PAGE, OF THE ABBOTSFORD CAR HOUSE)

The Melbourne Tramways Employees Band has been in existence about 7 years. It was originally established under the superintendence of bandmaster Chapman for the purpose of amusement, the Company buying the instruments for £175. In 1890, Thos. Wilks was elected bandmaster and he has since held that position with credit. All the bandsmen are employees and there are 30 members. The band has often played for charities and has collected a large amount for this good end. The President is James Denham and the Hon. Sec. Thos. Deal.

Illustrated Australian News
August 1st., 1895.

Caption to photo

"The tramways Band (from a photo by Mr. Page of the Abbotsford Car house) "