

FIFTY YEARS OF TRAMWAY BUSES

IN MELBOURNE

by K. S. Kings

Many people who have researched transport history, and others who have lived through the 1940's and 1950's, will know that countless newspaper editorials and "Letters to the Editor" have accused the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board of being anti-bus, and have maligned them accordingly. This attitude has apparently stemmed from their personal preference of vehicles and their observation that the Board operated many more trams than motor buses. They have ignored history. It is little known that the M. & M. T. B. was the first tramway operator in Australia to run motor buses after the end of World War I, and thus becomes the oldest continuous street transport operator of motor buses in Australia. Admittedly this claim became debatable in the early 1930's when only a tourist bus was operated in season, with the other buses stored and awaiting further use. The Board was not the first tramway operator to run motor buses in Australia; they were preceded by Hobart (for six months) in 1905, the Victorian Railways in 1905-1906 (five months before they opened their St. Kilda tramway), New South Wales Railways in 1905-1906, and the Melbourne Electric Supply Company Limited at their Geelong Tramways from 1912 to 1922. The M. & M. T. B. was closely followed by the Municipal Tramways Trust, Adelaide, on 15th March, 1925, Hobart City Council in October 1925, Brisbane Tramways on 26th November, 1925 (to 24th November, 1927, and then from 6th July, 1940), and the Electric Supply Company of Victoria Limited, Ballarat, in 1926. Other dates are: Sydney, 1st March 1933; Kalgoorlie, 1933 or 1934; Newcastle, 22nd September, 1935; Launceston 1st July, 1936; Fremantle, September 1938; Perth, probably 1941. The M. & M. T. B. was created on 1st November, 1919 to absorb several existing operators of cable and electric tramways, but none of these undertakings had used motor buses (the Victorian Railways trams were not transferred).

Melbourne's public transport in the middle of last century consisted of horse cabs and buses. Attempts were made in the 1860's to introduce horse trams, but approval was not granted. The Melbourne Omnibus Company was founded in 1869 and quickly became the main horse bus operator. It wanted to instal horse trams, planned its buildings accordingly, and was reorganised as the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Company. State Parliament eventually passed the Tramways Act in 1884, and a number of municipalities availed themselves of its provisions and created the Melbourne Tramways Trust. This Trust decided to construct a cable tramway system and lease it to the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Company for the latter to operate. The trust built the tracks and engine houses and the Company the car sheds and rolling stock. This arrangement seems to have worked quite well except near and at the termination of the lease in 1916, when disputes arose as to the standard of maintenance on the tracks and the compensation payable to the Company for its assets. Service commenced on 11th November, 1885, and the 43-3/4 mile double track system was complete by October, 1891. A 2 1/2 mile cable line was opened by a private company in February, 1890 between Clifton Hill and Northcote, while municipal councils created Tramway Trusts to build and operate electric trams in some of the eastern, northern and western suburbs beyond the area served by the cable trams, from 1910. Essendon and Maribyrnong were served by electric trams of a private company from 1906, while five suburban horse tram routes served limited areas from approximately 1890 to 1923. The Victorian Railways operated a suburban train service over several lines, as well as short electric tramways at Elwood and Sandringham. Horse buses and cabs persisted into this century while private companies pioneered the use of motor buses.

This, briefly, was the Melbourne scene after the end of the first world war, into which entered a new factor - the returned servicemen with accumulated pay and knowledge of the development of the motor vehicle. Some of these men put their money into a chassis and elementary body and ran along suburban streets, while others pooled their resources, formed companies, and ran into the city using several vehicles. Competition was continuous and at times serious between drivers and operators, as well as with the trams, and there are many stories told about high-speed running and high running tempers! By 1924, both the tramways and railways were feeling the effects of the unrestricted competition, while officialdom was casting a heavy glance at some of the unruly aspects of the situation.

The Tramways Board was considering using motor buses for two purposes: to counter competition from the private operators and to aid the conversion of its cable tramways to electric tramways. However, the Board's powers to run motor buses were limited by its Act of Parliament which permitted it to run buses only for "stimulating or developing the traffic of any tramways". This was amended in December, 1923, to "aiding or relieving traffic on tramways", and, although still rather restrictive, was an improvement. Mr. Cameron, the Board's first Chairman, returned from an overseas study tour in February, 1924, with much useful information, including a quantity on motor buses. These factors caused the Board to call tenders for 45 motor bus chassis and bodies. The contracts were let by the middle of the year and it was hoped that the buses would be running about November. English chassis had been selected and they were to carry locally built bodies. The first service commenced on 3rd January, 1925, from the City at Latrobe Street, via Swanston Street, St. Kilda Road, High Street, Brighton Road and Glenhuntly Road to Elsternwick Station. This service enabled passengers from the Glenhuntly Road electric trams (which originated in the rapidly growing Carnegie district) to continue to the city by M. & M.T.B. vehicle instead of by private bus or train. However, until the middle of the year, the effectiveness of the buses was somewhat restricted due to the Minister of Public Works requesting that passengers be limited to the seating capacity of the bus!

The Board also applied to operate buses on three other routes:- (1) Camberwell Junction to Hawthorn Bridge via Camberwell and Burwood Roads. (2) Corner of Burke Road and Barkers Road, to Victoria Bridge via Barkers Road. (3) Essendon to Heidelberg. The Minister felt that these routes should be operated by private buses, and did not grant them to the Board. The Motor Omnibus Act came into force on 1st February, 1925, and contained provisions to control and regulate bus traffic. It consisted of a Chairman and representatives of municipalities, railways, private owners and the M. & M.T.B. During a tramway strike in May, 1924, many private buses had been hastily placed in service over most of the tram routes, and had remained. This unrestricted operation, and, in some instances, worrying degrees of rivalry between owners, drivers and tram crews, brought about the Motor Bus Acts of 1924 and 1925, which gave a degree of order to the industry.

The Board's buses were garaged at the former cable tram car sheds in Brighton Road and Acland Streets, St. Kilda, with a workshop provided at the former location. By June 1926, there were 56 buses, and the annual report noted that eleven buses had received major repairs to frames and bodies necessitated by the bad state of the road surfaces. By June 30th, 1926, the Board was operating three suburban bus routes, namely Victoria Bridge via Barkers and

Mont Albert Roads to Balwyn Road; Williamstown to Newport Station; and Williamstown to North Williamstown Station (via-a circular route). Five buses for the former route were housed in a shed at the cable tram depot at Victoria Bridge until the line from the city was converted to electric trams, after which they operated from Scotchmer Street, North Fitzroy. Apparently traffic decreased and only two buses were running when the service ceased on 30th April, 1931. The Williamstown Council apparently wanted the Tramways Board to operate buses in its area sufficiently to provide free garage space, initially in a local timber yard and later on Council land. Five buses were required for the two services, which are believed to have commenced on 16th April, 1926. A change in Council reversed the free depot space situation, and contributed to the services ceasing to operate on 31st December, 1930. Meanwhile, the remainder of the fleet had been used on successive cable tram conversion schemes as required.

The Board's first twelve motor buses were built on Tilling Stevens petrol-electric chassis with 32 seat bodies, being Nos. 1 - 12. Nos. 13 - 24 were built on large Thornycroft J type chassis and Nos. 25 - 44 on smaller Thornycroft PT type chassis, with 29 and 30 seat bodies respectively. Nos. 45 and 46 were Garford HL chassis with 29 seat bodies, while Nos. 47 - 50 carried 20 seat bodies on Garford KB chassis. Nos. 51 - 56 had 24 seat bodies on Thornycroft "Boadicea" chassis. All were in use by the end of 1925. The Thornycroft J type chassis apparently proved unsuccessful as Nos. 13 - 24 received ADC chassis during 1929. All bodies were built by contract except Nos. 47 - 50 and three of the Nos. 51 - 56 group, which were built in the Board's own workshops. A "de luxe" tourist bus, seating 25 passengers in cane arm-chairs, was built by the Nicholson Street cable tram workshops in 1929 and used on a series of six routes around the suburbs. This bus became No. 57, subsequently ran un-numbered, and then became No. 28. It was fitted with a wireless set in 1936. It was the only motor bus operated by the Board during 1932 - 1934. Most of the buses had their solid rubber tyres replaced by pneumatic tyres in 1929 - 30, which work meant that modifications had to be made to the geometry of the steering gear. Most of these buses had been sold by 1936, although the last lingered until the early 1940's, when the remaining four bodies were placed on new chassis which kept them in service until 1949.

As the severe economic depression of the late 1920's and early 1930's eased, the M. & M.T.B. entered upon the second phase of its motor bus operations. This was stimulated partly by their decision to continue with the conversion of the cable tramways and partly by the need to commence new routes which could be best served by buses. The former required buses for interim use while electric tram tracks were built or to provide permanent service on routes which were not to receive electric trams. Conversion of the Elizabeth Street cable trams commenced at North Melbourne on 21st July, 1935, when buses began running the interim service. Some of the "original" fleet plus two "new" buses were used. The latter were the bodies from Nos. 45 and 46 on a Leyland "Lioness" and Albion "Valiant" chassis, which became Nos. 30 and 29 respectively. They were powered by compression ignition engines, otherwise known as diesels. The West Melbourne route was permanently operated by buses from the same day. This major conversion project was completed when electric trams began running along Sydney Road through Brunswick on 25th April, 1936. The Rathdown Street, North Carlton, cable trams ceased on 1st August, 1936, and buses commenced the next day. They were extended along Park Street and north along Nicholson Street to Blyth Street, East Brunswick. In the city, they varied from the tram route by continuing south along Russell Street and west along Flinders Street

to terminate at Elizabeth Street. A service from the city to Fishermens Bend (Coode Canal) commenced on 25th May, 1936, to be followed by Footscray to Sunshine, Footscray to Moonee Ponds (one service via Maribyrnong and another via Ascot Vale) on 6th December, 1936, and City to Port Melbourne on 14th March, 1937 (a cable tram conversion). The latter route was through-routed to East Brunswick. A small garage to house and service twelve buses was built adjacent to the electric tram depot at Footscray, while a larger depot for 29 vehicles was opened at Port Melbourne to enable these new services to be run.

Many new vehicles were required for this expansion. Ten Leyland Cub chassis received Ruskin Motors bodies in 1935, and were followed by 33 more with Preston Workshops bodies during 1936 - 1938. Eight Federals were commissioned in 1937, but the most interesting vehicle of the period was No. 2 a Daimler chassis with fluid flywheel, self-changing gear box and diesel engine. Ten small Bedford chassis with 14 seat bodies entered service in 1936 and contrasted with the 18 relatively big Leyland "Tiger" chassis with 31 seat bodies which were built during 1937 - 38. The South Melbourne cable tramway was converted to electric trams between 14th March and 24th July, 1937. Meanwhile, Sunday morning services were operated on the Port Melbourne and Footscray to Moonee Ponds via Maribyrnong routes from 4th October, 1936. As at 30th June, 1937, there were 71 buses in stock operating 27,485 miles of route, and the Board had decided to proceed with the final cable tramway conversion - Bourke Street to Northcote and East Brunswick - to electric trams.

With the conversion of the Carlton (Collingwood) cable tramway along Johnston Street about to take place, application was made to extend the buses to East Kew, but negotiations to take over the private operators who ran this section became protracted. The conversion took place on 16th April, 1939, but East Kew Junction was not reached until 29th December, 1940, and East Kew until 19th January, 1941. With the completion of a new bridge over the Yarra River at Punt Road, the Board commenced running from Point Ormond to Collingwood (just north of Johnston Street) on 22nd December, 1938. The Footscray to Moonee Ponds via Ascot Vale service was suspended on 23rd July, 1938 while buses commenced running from Caulfield railway station via Bambra Road to South Caulfield on 14th May, 1939. An extension was made from Sunshine to Deer Park on 8th August, 1938, and a service commenced on 19th July, 1939 from Newmarket station to North Brooklyn. The Board's annual report for 1938 mentioned that one chassis with a "pancake" underfloor engine had been ordered, but no further information is available on it. When the Board's second Chairman, H. H. Bell, Snr., returned from his overseas study tour in October, 1938, his report indicated that he was most impressed with diesel buses and their development during the middle 1930's. He recommended that instead of converting the Bourke Street cable trams to electric trams the Board should use diesel buses. Accordingly, tenders were called for 70 chassis and Leyland torque convertor type units were accepted. One double deck body was to be imported from Leylands with 44 more built by local contract, and 25 single deck bodies to be constructed by Preston Workshops. It was planned for the change-over to take place in March 1940.

With the gradual withdrawal of the cable trams, the Nicholson Street Repair Shops were getting less use, and it was decided to use some sections for a motor bus workshop and garage. As the political situation deteriorated in Europe, the Federal Government made plans accordingly, and some of these naturally involved the Tramways Board - fuel conservation, blackout

precautions and evacuation movements. Another 20 Leyland "Tiger" buses entered service during 1938 - 39; together with one chassis fitted with special equipment to enable compressed coal gas to be used as the fuel, bringing the fleet to 113 vehicles. A new tourist bus was imported from Canada, but circumstances soon saw it on route work for the rest of its life. It had a full front body, two power operated doors, treadle operated rear door, sensitised door edges, heating, rubber mudguards, special interior lighting and a public address system. A storage yard was built on purchased properties at Collingwood, near the former cable tram terminus, while both Footscray and Port Melbourne Depots were extended. The outbreak of war caused the Federal Government to ask the Board to conserve fuel stocks as much as possible, and this resulted in the cable trams running longer than expected. They were finally withdrawn during the evening of 26th October, 1940, with the new double deck buses completing the night's service. A re-arrangement of routes ensued. The East Brunswick buses ran straight down Nicholson Street and into Bourke Street, while the North Carlton buses terminated in the city in Lonsdale Street at Elizabeth Street. The Port Melbourne route became through-routed to Collingwood. The tourist buses had been withdrawn on 10th July, while re-routing in the Footscray area and an extension at Deer Park operated from 25th November, 1940. The remainder of the cable tram workshops were demolished and the final sections of the bus garage and workshops put in hand. Fourteen more single deck rear entrance buses were built, to be followed by the first of the "wartime" units - three timber frame with masonite and canvas sides and roof on hired chassis, and three on large Leyland chassis.

Negotiations were carried out with private operators to purchase vehicles which had to be withdrawn from routes and charter work due to petrol rationing. The Federal Government needed transport to its rapidly expanding factories in the West Maribyrnong area, and special routes were operated from North Essendon, Coburg and North Fitzroy. Further "Munitions Buses" were hurriedly built by Preston Workshops on a variety of chassis. All-night service commenced on the existing Port Melbourne and Northcote routes, with a special route to Heidelberg. "Staggering" of working hours helped to ease periods of critical loading, but the situation was acute in the Footscray, Maribyrnong and Fishermens Bend areas at change of shift times. About 27 buses and coaches were purchased from private operators and sixty "Munitions" bodies built on assorted chassis to help ease the problems. The Holden Street shuttle tram service had been replaced by a bus on 25th October, 1939, but reverted to a tram on 20th July, 1941. When an electric tramway was opened in Maribyrnong and Ascot Vale Roads on 24th May, 1942, the All-night bus routes to the West Maribyrnong area were cut back to Moonee Ponds Junction, while the All-night bus route from Elsternwick Station to Middle Brighton was taken over on 27th September, 1941. Conductresses were employed from September, 1941, initially working the city area as assistants, but shortly from North Fitzroy Depot. "Brown-out" conditions of reduced interior and exterior lighting began on 12th December, 1941, and continued until June, 1943. From July, stopping places were reduced from approximately eight to five per mile to reduce wear and maintenance on buses. The old traffic offices at Clifton Hill (former cable tram shed) were altered to house gas compressing equipment, and 17 petrol engined Leyland buses were converted for use on the Collingwood to Point Ormond route. The cylinders permitted one round trip on the route, but it appears that the results were not satisfactory. It was not until 30th

December, 1945, that the Board was permitted to carry passengers north of the Collingwood terminus along Hoddle Street to Clifton Hill. Double deck and single deck rear entrance buses were used for overall wartime advertising and continued thus into the post-war years until about 1950.

The year 1943 saw the elementary "Munitions" body superseded by the improved "Austerity" body, but still only on petrol engined truck chassis. A total of 47 of these buses were built by Preston Workshops during 1943 to 1946, while 12 such chassis were used in three groups of four each to re-body ex-1925 bodies, re-body purchased buses, and to build stylish post-war bodies (the latter in 1947). At 30th June, 1941, there were 205 buses operating 63,883 miles of route, while four years later there were 326 buses on the roster operating 64,992 miles of normal route service, 18,716 miles of All-night service and 14 special services to munitions works. The Board reviewed the use of the buses on the Bourke Street routes in August 1943, and it was felt that they had not been as successful in meeting the transport needs of the travelling public as had been expected. The matter was referred to the local Councils concerned - Melbourne, Fitzroy, Collingwood and Northcote - and they agreed unanimously. Consequently, the Board decided to proceed with the work of converting the routes to electric trams as an immediate post-war task, noting that it would assist in making the transition from war to peace easier. An extension opened from Sunshine to Sunshine Park on 29th July, 1945, and the war came to a swift end in the middle of the following month. Munitions factories were already decreasing production and shifts had generally decreased from three to two per day even before this event. The bus fleet emerged from this difficult period with its heavy diesels starting to show the strain, and the majority of its numbers consisting of smaller units, most of the latter being emergency "Munitions" buses and limited life "Austerity" buses. The Board had ordered 67 chassis from Leyland Motors in England in 1941, but they were not delivered until 1947. Forty of these chassis received 31 seat bodies by the Sydney firm of Commonwealth Engineering while the remaining 27 were fitted out at Preston Workshops. They entered service between 5th August, 1947 and 12th July, 1949. Thus commenced the post-war re-equipment program.

The next order was for 30 more Leylands, with 41 seat bodies by the same Sydney manufacturer, and they were commissioned in 1950. The English firm of A. E. C. then received a succession of orders for 135 chassis which received 41 seat bodies - 65 by Commonwealth Engineering Co. in Sydney, 69 by Martin and King (Melbourne) and one by Ansair (Melbourne) - between 1951 and 1954. The influx of these 232 new buses in less than seven years caused a dramatic transformation to the bus fleet, and resulted in most of the old vehicles being sold. The last of the double deck buses was retired early in 1954. All the post-war diesel buses were built with driver operated doors and route number boxes, the latter being brought into use early in 1954. The late 1940's saw the progressive termination of the special services operated to munitions plants, some variations to other services to meet changing conditions and requests for new services. September 1950, saw the introduction of queue at loading points at the Y. M. C. A., City South, and at selected stops in Bourke Street in June, 1951. Two other experiments were conducted on Bourke Street buses. "Honesty Boxes" were fitted to the 45 double deckers on 7th April, 1952, but results were poor and their use was not extended. Four of the first

batch of 41 seat buses had signs placed at their doorways introducing "Circulation Loading" - in at the front and out at the rear. The early response was good - particularly when supervised by Inspectors - but the overall situation apparently did not warrant its continuance or extension. This took place in May and June 1950. June 1951 also saw the introduction of street collection of fares by conductors or conductresses, equipped with ticket issuing machines, at four main stops in the city area. This proved successful, and was extended.

A service from Footscray to Sunshine via South Road had commenced on 21st November, 1948, and it and the original route (via Ballarat Road) were extended from Footscray Station to the city on 9th November, 1952. They worked over the existing West Melbourne route which was incorporated in the new arrangement (except for the last short section along Abbotsford Street), but the terminus was removed from Elizabeth Street to Queen Street (at Flinders Street), in the city.

Surveys were carried out late in 1953 on the North Kew and Sunshine/Deer Park route to determine the likely patronage for express or Minimum Fare Buses. The results showed that minimum fare buses on the North Kew route would be warranted, and they commenced on 12th October. Industrial trouble took place about this time in relation to the use of ticket machines by bus drivers and the question of one-man operation of buses with more than 31 seats. The Board wanted to introduce 41 seat buses on existing one-man routes but the Employees Union refused to allow members to drive them. A series of strikes, negotiations and trials ensued, decisions and revisions were handed down, but the matter was not satisfactorily settled. The matter emerged again in the late 1960's when the Board wanted to replace the remaining two-man bus routes by one-man vehicles. Further strikes and arbitration followed, resulting in the situation that the Board cannot convert a two-man tram or bus route to one-man operation without the consent of the Union.

Work finally commenced on 10th March, 1954 to convert the Bourke Street routes to electric trams, and this necessitated progressive re-routing of buses as some streets were closed to traffic while the old cable tram tracks were removed and replaced by new electric tram tracks. The last bus to Northcote left the Bourke Street terminus on Saturday night, 25th June, 1955, and the East Brunswick buses were diverted via Albert Street into Lonsdale Street from the next day, until replaced by electric trams on 8th April, 1956. The Northcote conversion saw the withdrawal of the remaining single deck rear entrance buses and the storing of the 30 Leylands built in 1950.

The East Brunswick conversion allowed a re-arrangement of buses, and the long awaited route to Heidelberg (although only to Oriel Road) started the next day. It was routed via North Carlton and absorbed this service, and likewise part of the Holden Street shuttle bus route. The city terminus was in Russell Street at Lonsdale Street, but this was moved south to Bourke Street from 12th August. From 15th October, the service extended to Southern Road, near the site of the Olympic Village, to which a temporary extension was operated for the period concerned. Twenty five underfloor engines A. E. C. chassis had been ordered, but the outcome of the 1953-1954 disputes caused the Board to decide to chop off the rear sections of these big chassis and build only 31 seat bodies on them. They entered service during 1956-57, with bodies built in Adelaide by J. A. Lawton and Son. The Olympic Games caused the

Board (and many private bus operators to provide dozens of buses for use by competitors and spectators. The 30 Leylands were brought out of storage (and later sold).

Most of the trams used on the All-night services were elderly four wheel type cars and they were withdrawn on Sunday 17th February, 1957, to be replaced by buses running on revised routes and timetables. From 7th September, 1958, the Victorian Railways withdrew the Sunday evening service on the Fawkner line, and arrangements were made with the Board to carry passengers on the parallel North Coburg tram line, with Board buses from there to Fawkner. The electric railway line was extended in stages, and the Sunday evening bus followed suit, reaching Upfield on 8th January, 1967. The Sunday rail service was withdrawn and passengers carried by the Board's trams and buses. During 1959-60, five suburban tram services were withdrawn on Sundays and replaced by one-man buses.

North Fitzroy Depot was provided with a bus washing machine (and other Depots, likewise, subsequently), and a "Vacuum Cleaner" unit - a large extractor fan, room-size receptacle and concertina connection to the bus, - to assist in cleaning rubbish from interiors of buses. The Point Ormond to Elsternwick Station shuttle tram ceased on 2nd October, 1960, and was replaced by an extension of the Punt Road bus route. The three local tram routes at Footscray closed on 10th March, 1962, to be replaced by one-man buses. The Board desired to extend the East Kew bus route to the new suburb of Bulleen but the area was partly served by a section of privately operated service. This operator (Withers - Ed) also served the area beyond, to Doncaster, Templestowe, Warrandyte and North Ringwood. The resulting negotiations saw the Board purchase all the routes and 20 buses, as from 2nd July, 1961. At this period, the Board shortened 40 of its 41 seater buses to 31 seaters to allow them to be one-man operated; subsequently, ten more were altered. Sunday, 17th December, 1961 saw the Board commence running a scenic bus tour over existing routes in the Warrandyte and North Ringwood areas, from the city. Patronage at first was pleasing, but declined, and the experiment ceased. The 25 A. E. C. underfloor engined buses which had been built in 1956 were fitted with fluorescent interior lighting in 1962, and a contract was let for 100 new underfloor engined buses. The chassis were A. E. C. Mk VI, and the body contract was let to Freighters, of Adelaide (who had taken over the firm of J. A. Lawton & Son). A political storm was created, and the contract was transferred to the firm's Moorabbin (Melbourne) plant, which normally built truck bodies. These buses entered service during 1964 - 1966, and took over the services operated from Doncaster and Footscray Depots. The depot which had been purchased from the private operator at Doncaster was replaced by a new depot on 8th June, 1965. A few of these new buses ran from North Fitzroy Depot until sent to Doncaster on 31st December 1967 when two routes in the Box Hill to East Kew area were purchased from a private operator (Rouch and Kennedy - Ed).

Port Melbourne Depot was closed on 30th July, 1966 and its vehicles and staff transferred to North Fitzroy Depot. The West Heidelberg route was extended to the newly opened regional shopping complex at Northland on 4th October, 1966, and to the new Latrobe University on 13th March, 1967.



Various alterations to routes and services have been made in the 'Doncaster' area from time to time, due to steadily rising traffic. The reverse situation exists in the 'Footscray' area, where the number of buses required is steadily decreasing. The All-night bus services were withdrawn on 17th November, 1968, due to a lack of patronage, while the Deer Park route was extended westward to serve a new housing area on 15th September, 1969.

A further ten buses were shortened from 41 to 31 seats in 1972, making a total of 60 such units. There are 73 buses still with 41 seats, while two more of this series have been transferred to the Civil Engineering Branch. Fourteen of the post-war Leyland 31 seat buses remain, but are not in use. Currently, the Board has on order 30 "National" type buses from Leyland, which were due for delivery several months ago. The first two were received on 22nd October, 1974, but it is not known when any will enter service. Possibly January 3rd, 1975 would have been an appropriate day - and thus the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board would have entered its second half century of running "Tramway Buses" with due gusto. The new vehicles bear the orange colour scheme introduced by the Board's new prototype tram in 1973. It is also interesting to note that the Board's buses introduced the present green and cream colours in 1925 (the trams had been standardised on brown and cream in the early 1920's from the several colours of the former operators). There are presently 272 buses on hand (excluding the Nationals), of which 14 are in reserve. Total route mileage is 276.28, including 163.47 miles in the "Doncaster" area. Due to multiple use of thoroughfares by various routes, these services actually traverse 144.22 miles of streets.