

Sam wins young hearts

■ Children from Cottage by the Sea, a camp for disadvantaged youngsters whose families are in crisis, were the first to ride on Sam the Tram.

It was smiles all round for the six young passengers wearing Sam T-shirts and badges as they became celebrities for the day.

Sam and his friends are characters from a new children's book, 'Sam the Tram' written by Lowen Clarke, that was launched on Thursday, November 29.

In recognition of the book and the role it will

play in promoting trams and public transport to the young and young at heart, the PTC is decorating 10 W class trams with Sam's features.

The first of the Sam trams was introduced to coincide with the book's launch. Lead by the Toast Rack tram, decked out in green and gold and carrying the Melbourne Metropolitan Transit Band, it was a colorful procession that travelled through Melbourne's streets.

Chief Executive, Ian Stoney, and Transport Minister, Peter Spyker, welcomed Sam to Melbourne.

Mr Stoney's message was to encourage children to take pride in their transport system - particularly trams.

"By talking to children at their level we hope to instill pride and respect for our trams and other vehicles. Sam the Tram is a perfect way to do this," Mr Stoney said.

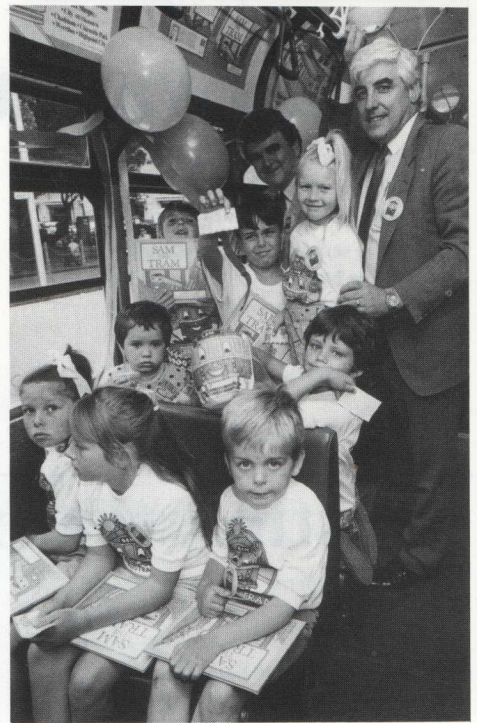
Mr Spyker held a welcome Sam banner as the tram made its way down Bourke Street Mall - crowded with city shoppers and enthusiastic onlookers.

He officially launched the book in the Myer bookstore, making the point to children that the trams did not belong to him or the government, but to the children of Melbourne.

Author, Lowen Clarke, who has been an enthusiastic ambassador for the project from the start was clearly thrilled with the response.

He had the following to say about the launch:

"So many different people co-operating because they want to, and to whom I offer my thanks. None of it driven by money, only by the desire to achieve something pleasurable,

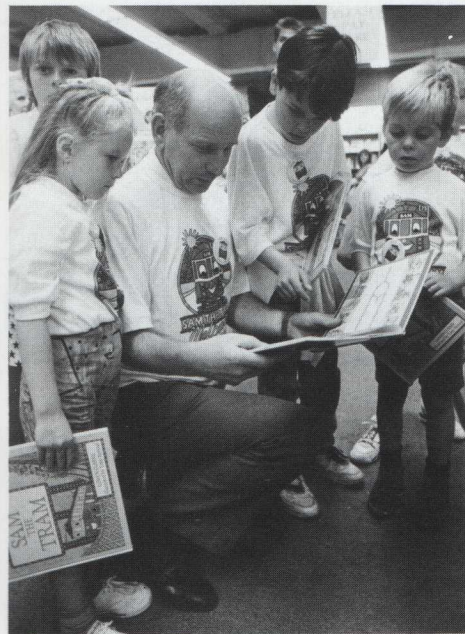


Chief Executive Public Transport Corporation, Ian Stoney (right), and General Manager Tram and Bus, Russell Nathan, with the children from Queenscliff's Cottage by the Sea, on the first Sam the Tram

some fun which adds to our lives.

"And as Sam and his friends bring smiles to children and tourists, let us see those smiles as reminders that we too can occasionally take a little time out and enjoy what is around us," Lowen said in closing.

Thanks to all staff involved in making the launch a success. Staff on the Sam trams are asked to wear their Sam badges. The books are on sale at Met Shops for \$12.95. A great idea for Christmas.



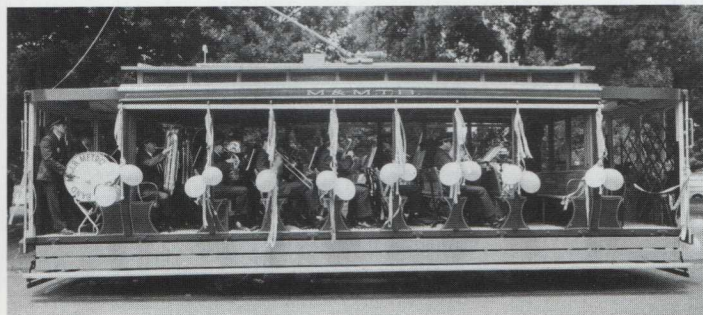
Minister for Transport, Peter Spyker, reads the book to Sam's first fans



10 Sam the Trams will be seen trundling along Melbourne's tracks



Bourke Street Mall shoppers were treated to Sam the Tram on his first journey to town



The Melbourne Metropolitan Transit Band were a big hit with onlookers as they lead the way to the Mall on the Toast Rack tram



Author, Lowen Clarke, autographs the Sam the Tram books which are already selling well