

Tram cram? Loaded question

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Melbourne's most-crowded trams are on the inner-northern routes of 1 and 6, according to a new state government report, which also claims overcrowding is rare and the commuter crush at peak times is improving.

But public transport advocates say the report misses the real story of overcrowded trams in the CBD by cherry-picking survey locations to deliver more favourable results.

The transport department's annual tram load report, which surveyed passenger volumes over a nine-day period in May, found only four instances of CBD trams that were over capacity in peak times.

Public Transport Users Association spokesman Daniel Bowen said the rosy report could be explained by looking at the map of survey locations.

"They put the survey people on the edge of the CBD, which makes sense until you take into account the free tram zone," he said.

"The trams are often packed as



Yesterday's tram commute.
Photo: Chris Hopkins

you move through the CBD, so if you're trying to board a tram on Bourke Street it may be so crowded you can't get on.

"It's good they keep an eye on crowding ... but there's an issue in how they're doing that."

For example, the only survey point along Bourke Street was at Spring Street, ignoring busy stops on Elizabeth and Swanston streets.

But the report shows improvements at the surveyed tram



stops, which have not changed over the past three reports.

No trams were found to be overcrowded in the CBD between 3pm and 7pm, which is down from a total of three last year.

The four overcrowded trams found during the morning peak, from 7am to 10am, are down from the eight recorded last year.

This does not mean other trams observed in the survey were not crowded, only that they did not

exceed capacity, which is 180 passengers on the most modern E-class trams.

Mr Bowen said there had been huge growth on some tram routes, such as from Collins Street to Docklands, which saw a passenger increase of 45 per cent this year.

"Authorities need to get serious about on-road tram priority, allowing the fleet to run more services, and continuing deployment of larger accessible trams," he said.