

Transport safeguards

AGE 30.10.98

The Government guarantees good service when trains and trams are privatised next year.

By **LYALL JOHNSON**
TRANSPORT REPORTER

Private companies buying into Melbourne's public transport system will be required to conform to a charter guaranteeing services to the public.

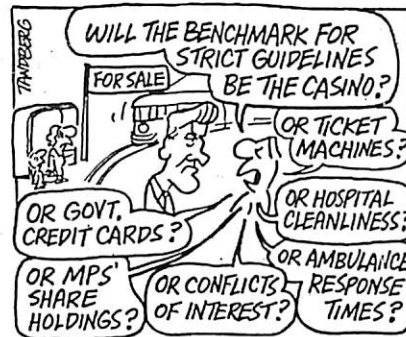
The charter will form part of the contractual arrangements between the State Government and transport companies when the metropolitan train and tram networks are privatised from next year.

Guarantees to passengers will include the maintenance of certain levels of service, fare increases not to exceed the rate of inflation, and safety requirements, including the maintenance of existing staff levels on railway stations.

Passengers' charter guarantees

- ▶ Train and tram services maintained at existing levels. No timetable changes unless approved by Director of Public Transport
- ▶ Fares pegged to CPI
- ▶ Existing fare concessions remain
- ▶ Multi-modal Metcard system remains; City Circle travel stays free
- ▶ Access to timetables simplified
- ▶ Performance standards rigorously monitored by director, who has power to dismiss, penalise or provide incentives
- ▶ High levels of customer service
- ▶ Information on punctuality and reliability published regularly
- ▶ Passengers to be compensated for poor service
- ▶ Extra services to avoid overcrowding
- ▶ Passenger safety and security a priority
- ▶ Access improvements for people with special needs
- ▶ W class trams retained
- ▶ Complaints to be dealt with promptly

Source: State Government



Releasing the charter yesterday, the Government said any company that failed to meet the terms of its contract to run public transport would be sacked.

The Government has appointed a new Director of Public Transport, Mr John Taylor, who will oversee private operators when they begin running the tram and train networks.

"(The director) has, in fact, the power ultimately if they continue to non-perform ... to dismiss a con-

tract and run that part of the service himself until a replacement can be found," said the Transport Minister, Mr Robin Cooper.

Before the public transport appointment, Mr Taylor worked for 10 years as general manager of Melbourne Airport, taking it through the privatisation process.

As Director of Public Transport, he will have the power to impose financial penalties on private operators that fail to meet their contrac-

tual requirements. He will also have power to provide incentives for those whose performance exceeds their contractual terms.

Mr Cooper yesterday said the charter, which comes into effect in mid-1999, was the first of its kind in Victoria. He said it would not just safeguard public transport users against deterioration of services, but enhance them.

The Government's announcement was welcomed by the Opposition's

transport spokesman, Mr Peter Batchelor, and public service groups, but they called for details of the contracts to be made public.

"It's one thing to talk tough but we want them to act tough and want some demonstration that it's not just huffing and puffing before privatisation and the election," Mr Batchelor said.

"This Government has never been tough with private firms — you only have to look at how they let One Link off the hook for more than three years for proof of that."

The Victorian Council of Social Service and Environment Victoria, both of which had input into the charter, were pleased with the result, describing it as "huge advancement" on the customer charter the Government released earlier this year.

Melbourne's privatised public transport network will consist of two tram companies and two train companies, each covering designated regions, but still offering an integrated service.

You are holding a copy of the new public transport Passengers' Charter

The Charter contains a whole range of guarantees for passengers using Victoria's trains and trams – guarantees which will improve the quality of service provided on our public transport system.

Guarantees on services, on fares, on punctuality and reliability, and on the other issues which matter most to passengers.

The Government is currently in the process of letting contracts for the operation of Victoria's trains and trams. When these long term contracts come into effect next year, the guarantees in this document will become legally binding on operators.

Compliance with the Charter will be rigorously monitored by the new Office of the Director of Public Transport, which will be responsible for ensuring that passengers' interests are protected and services are improved.

The Government will continue to invest significant resources in the public transport system – to maintain and expand the services it provides for the community. And in return for this investment, it will require operators to meet published targets on quality, punctuality and reliability.

The Charter is a Government-backed initiative. A new, independent Passengers' Charter Committee, representing public transport users across Victoria, will be established to advise on all aspects of the Charter's development and implementation.

Our aim is a world class public transport system for the next century – a clean, efficient, modern system which serves the whole Victorian community.



New Guarantees for Public Transport Passengers

> effective mid 1999

- > If you have any comments about the Passengers' Charter, or would like more information, please contact us at:
Passengers' Charter Information Desk
Level 29 Nauru House
80 Collins Street
Melbourne 3000
- > Or ring us on the following number: 1800 264 644
- > Alternatively, you can email your comments and questions to Robin Cooper, the Minister for Transport, at the following address: enquiries@passengerscharter.vic.gov.au

 **Victoria ON THE MOVE**

THE 
passengers'
CHARTER

The Passengers' Charter Guarantees

Train and tram service levels will be maintained

The full existing passenger network of tram and train lines throughout Victoria will remain in operation.

There will be no changes to timetables unless such adjustments are approved by the Director of Public Transport, who will be required to consult the independent Passengers' Charter Committee.

Fares will not increase above the rate of inflation

The Government guarantees that throughout the term of each contract, fares will not increase above the rate of inflation.

Fares concessions will remain

Pensioners, senior citizens, students, people with disabilities and those in need will continue to be provided with their existing fare concessions.

Tickets will continue to be valid on all trains, trams and buses

The Government will require operators to cooperate to provide 'multi-modal' MetCard tickets, allowing passengers to make connections between Melbourne's trains, trams and buses using a single ticket.

Travel on Melbourne's famous City Circle tram route will continue to be free of charge for all Victorians and visitors to our State.

Access to timetable information will be made easier

Operators will be required to set up a new timetable inquiry and bookings service, using a single local rate telephone number. Based on the existing 'VicTrip' service, this will provide passengers across Victoria with up-to-date information about the train, tram and bus timetables and take credit card ticket bookings on country services. New, enforceable standards will be set to ensure that calls are answered promptly.

Up-to-date timetables will be available in printed form at stations, tram and bus stops, and in shops. 'Green buttons' will continue to provide timetable information on Metropolitan railway stations. Operators will also be required to place the full train, tram and bus timetables on the Internet.

Tram and train performance will be rigorously monitored

Operators will be given incentives to improve their punctuality and reliability, which will be monitored using trackside computer systems. Companies will face stiff penalty payments if their performance slips below published punctuality and reliability standards.

Customer service will have to meet stringent performance standards

Operators will be required to take action if station cleanliness, staff conduct and other key measures do not meet stringent customer satisfaction standards. These customer satisfaction standards will be published, along with the results of independent customer satisfaction surveys.

Punctuality and reliability performance results will be published

To ensure that operators are truly accountable to their customers, information regarding the punctuality and reliability of trains and trams will be published on a regular basis.

Passengers will be compensated for poor service

From next year, the new train and tram operators will be required to compensate passengers for poor punctuality and reliability, for instance through free extensions to a range of periodical tickets.

Crowding levels will be monitored and controlled

Operators will be required to run extra trains and trams if their services become overcrowded.

Personal safety and security will be improved

Operators will have to ensure that all their stations are properly lit. They will be required to cooperate with the police to help reduce crime on our public transport system. In addition, operators will be legally required to maintain staffing levels at manned stations. All Premium Stations will be maintained, and will continue to provide closed circuit television monitoring on platforms and in carparks. All metropolitan stations will continue to be equipped with customer 'help points'.

Access for people with special needs will be improved

The rights of all passengers are recognised and respected. Operators will be required to comply with State and Commonwealth standards on access for people with disabilities. A new Action Plan will be published, setting out a range of accessibility improvements to stations, vehicles and passenger information.

Melbourne's heritage trams will continue to operate

Victorians are justly proud of their famous heritage trams, which are important to our community and a great attraction to tourists from Australia and overseas. All fifty-three of these W Class trams will be kept in service and retain their famous livery.

Any complaints will be answered promptly and acted upon

Operators will be required to respond promptly and efficiently to passenger complaints. The Government will establish clear arrangements to ensure that passengers who wish to complain about the performance of train and tram operators are able to do so easily. The Director of Public Transport will provide a clear contact point for passengers who are not satisfied with the response they get from operators.

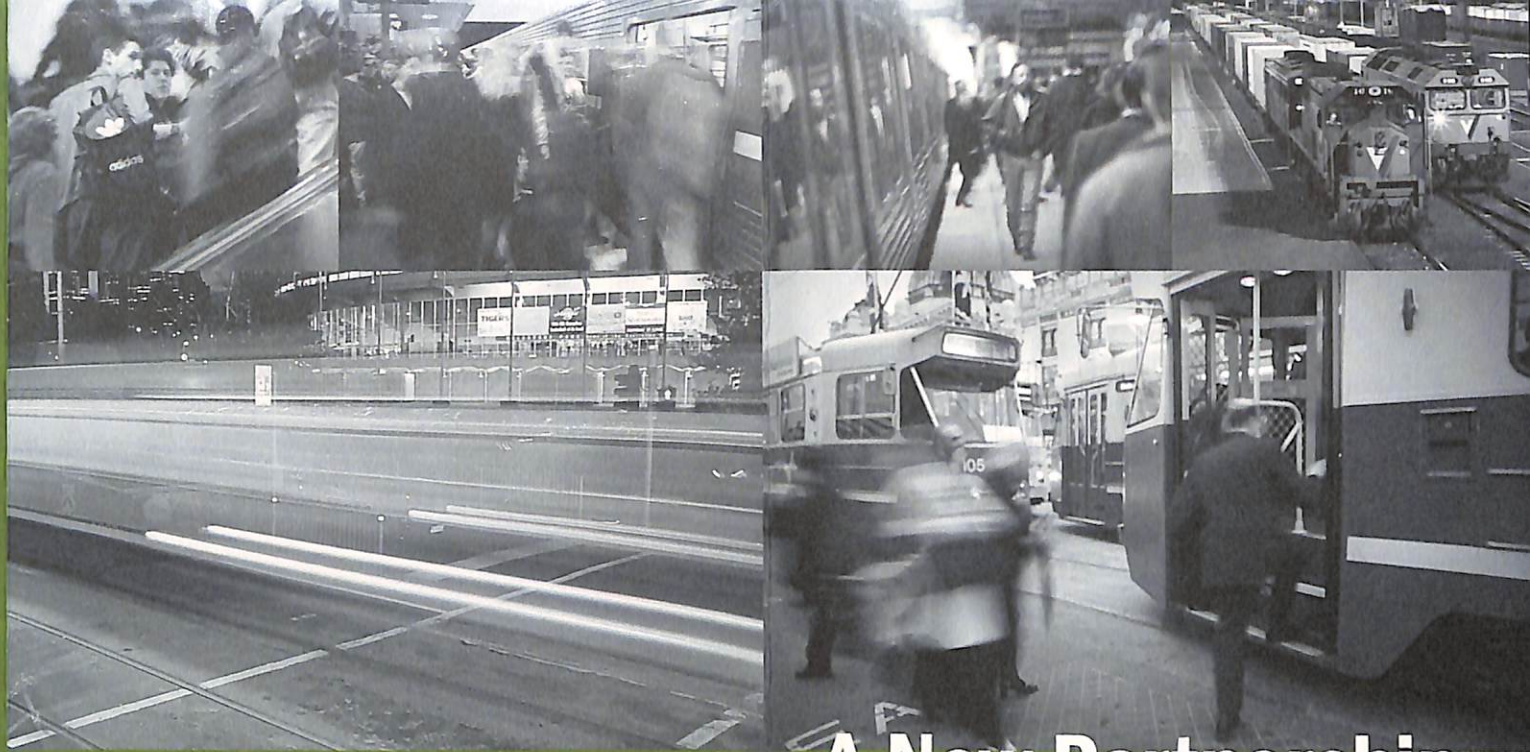
A New Partnership

The Government is in the process of letting contracts for the operation of Victoria's trains and trams. This leaflet explains what these reforms mean for you and your family. It explains how the reforms will work, and sets out clear guarantees which will protect the rights of public transport employees.

Victoria's train and tram service has a bright future. The Government will continue to invest significant resources in the public transport system – to maintain and expand the services it provides for the community. A new Passengers' Charter has been published, setting a clear framework for high standards of customer service into the future. And railfreight will be given new opportunities to invest and expand in the private sector.

Our aim is a world class public transport service fit for the next century – a clean, efficient, modern system which serves the whole Victorian community. A service in which you can take pride, and a service which values its employees.

If you would like a copy of the new Passengers' Charter, or simply want further information about the transport reform process, please contact the following number 03 9619 4148.



A New Partnership

Reforming Victoria's trains and trams:
what it means for public transport employees

A New Partnership

From a System to a Service

Victoria's public transport service has come a long way in the last six years. Our trains and trams are more reliable and more punctual. New services are being run. The service is more efficient and patronage is rising steadily.

Public transport employees deserve great credit for their role in turning things round – and the stage is now set to make Victoria's public transport service even better.

The next steps

In July 1998, the Public Transport Corporation (PTC) transferred its passenger operations to five new businesses with their own assets and personnel.



These five train and tram businesses will be franchised to private operators in the first half of 1999.



V/Line Freight, which was corporatised in July 1997, will be sold outright before the contracts for the passenger businesses are let.

Franchising and private ownership

Franchises are the contracts which will entitle private operators to take over the operations of the passenger train and tram businesses. These contracts will vary in length from business to business; some may be of seven years' duration; others may last fifteen years, where major new investment in vehicles or track is planned.

Over the months ahead, private sector bidders will compete against each other for the five passenger contracts. The Government will expect bidders to come up with ideas for new services, extra investment and other initiatives to boost patronage.

Once the bidding process is complete, the successful tenderer for each business will sign a contract with the Government. This contract will set out the services which each company has to provide – first and last services, frequencies through the day, and so on. The contract will control the fares which operators can charge, and set the future levels of financial support the industry will receive from the Government.

V/Line Freight will be sold outright as a commercial business. It does not require subsidy from the Government and will not be subject to a franchise contract.

The Government expects to receive bids from a wide range of different companies – including major, experienced transport providers at home and overseas. Its aim is to build a new partnership, blending the ideas and resources of the private sector with the knowledge and experience of the existing public transport workforce.

Guarantees for employees

The transformation of the PTC's performance which has taken place since 1992 would not have been possible without the dedication and effort of staff at all levels. This achievement is recognised in the Government guarantees set out below – guarantees that will ensure your interests are properly protected in the months and years ahead.

- > *The current Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) negotiated with the public transport unions will be observed. The EBA provides for a continuation of current award conditions and wage levels.*

- > *After privatisation, the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement can either be extended, or replaced with a new EBA. In either case, the terms of the EBA will be negotiated with the unions and voted upon by employees.*
- > *Superannuation rights will be protected. Employees who wish to continue in their current superannuation schemes will be able to do so.*

Guarantees for passengers

Franchising of passenger services will see a move away from day-to-day Government interference in public transport, and through new legally binding contracts, public transport users will get long term guarantees, ensuring that the train and tram companies deliver an efficient, clean, punctual and affordable service. Some of the key guarantees are set out below.

- > *Train and tram service levels will be improved*
- > *The full passenger network – including V/Line Passenger's train and coach network – will continue*
- > *Fares will not increase above the rate of inflation*
- > *Fares concessions will remain*
- > *Tickets will continue to be valid on all trains, trams and buses*
- > *Crowding levels will be monitored and controlled*
- > *Personal safety and security will be improved*
- > *Access for people with special needs will be improved*
- > *Melbourne's heritage trams will continue to operate*

An unprecedented commitment

Taken together, these Guarantees constitute an unprecedented commitment by Government to the future of our public transport service.

Victoria relies on its public transport service – and the public transport service relies on you. That is why a fair deal for staff lies at the heart of the Government's strategy for transport reform.