

MELBOURNE AND METROPOLITAN TRAMWAYS BOARD

HISTORICAL NOTES

PUBLIC STREET TRANSPORT IN MELBOURNE

Organised transport in Melbourne commenced in 1869 when the Melbourne Omnibus Company was formed but that Company had to be wound up three years later. Its place was taken by the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Company with a scheme to construct tramways in the City and suburbs.

The Company ran the first cable tram in Richmond in 1885. The tramcar which ran that first service was used up to the time of the complete abandonment of the cable system in 1940 - a record of 55 years service. That car is now an exhibit in the Melbourne Museum.

By 1891 there were 41 miles of cable lines in operation under the streets of Melbourne. The various lines were opened for traffic in the following order:

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|------------------|----|---------------|------|
| Richmond | - | 11th November | 1885 |
| Fitzroy | - | 2nd October | 1886 |
| Victoria Street | - | 22nd November | 1886 |
| Clifton Hill | - | 10th August | 1887 |
| Nicholson Street | -- | 22nd August | 1887 |
| Brunswick | - | 1st October | 1887 |
| Carlton | -- | 21st December | 1887 |
| Brighton Road | - | 11th October | 1888 |
| Prahran | - | 24th October | 1888 |
| Northcote | - | 14th October | 1889 |
| North Melbourne | - | 3rd March | 1890 |
| West Melbourne | - | 8th April | 1890 |
| South Melbourne | - | 17th June | 1890 |
| Port Melbourne | - | 17th June | 1890 |
| Windsor | - | 27th October | 1891 |

Up to 1918, tramways in Melbourne and suburbs were run by seven separate entities. In addition to the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Company, the suburban municipal councils conducted their own tramway services. These were:-

The Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust
The Hawthorn Tramways Trust
The Melbourne, Brunswick and Coburg Tramways Trust
The Footscray Tramways Trust

There were also the relatively minor Northcote Council's tramway and the North Melbourne, Essendon Electric Tramway Company.

Tramways had a significant influence on the development of the suburban areas. In 1910 the population of Caulfield was 11,000 by 1928 it had grown to 68,000. A similar pattern had emerged in most of the routes served by the tramways systems.

It became obvious that the state of affairs which involved a diversity of independent authorities organising street transport in the Metropolis could not continue efficiently. It was decided to consolidate the independent trusts and companies in one body, in the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board which by Act of Parliament in 1918 proceeded to succeed in turn to the assets of the trusts and companies. The process of consolidation was complete by 1921 and the Board commenced a plan to complete electrification and rationalisation of the systems.

The last cable tram in the system ran in Bourke Street on 26th October, 1940. The route was converted to omnibus operation thereafter. In 1955 an electric tramway system was adopted to replace the Bourke Street omnibuses.

The Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board is an independent statutory corporation with a common seal. The Board of three members, consisting of a Chairman, Deputy Chairman and one other Member, is responsible to Parliament through the Minister of Transport. The Board now operates tram services over 135 miles of double track and omnibus services over 135 miles. The Board still maintains Wattle Park in the Municipality of Box Hill, which vested in the Board when it succeeded to the assets of the original tramway trusts.

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