

"The Age" Office
Melbourne

November 11th 1947.

L.E. Russell Esq.,
Melb. & Metropolitan Tramways Board
616 Little Collins Street
Melbourne.

Dear Lou,

I have received your letter setting out, very properly and fairly, some of the achievements of Mr Bell's Chairmanship and shall keep the facts for reference when the time comes for any comment on the subject you mention.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Ham Campbell

On the 31st December next the period of office of the present
Melbourne Tramways Board will expire. Under the Chairmanship of Mr. H.
H. Bell the Board has put up a record of successful administration
not even approached far less excelled by any similar undertaking anywhere
in the world. Beginning with a loan indebtedness of £1,995,407, it has
reduced this to £3,958,783, notwithstanding that on the 11th November, 1947.

H. A. M. Campbell, Esq.,
Editor,
"The Age."

Dear Harold.

Led by the Chairman, the Melbourne Tramways Board has done such
a remarkably successful job during the 12 years which will end on the
31st December next that I think you may care for some facts in case you
may be having a leader on the question of the re-appointment of the Board.

While I have referred to the Board, actually the credit is
almost entirely due to the personality, driving force, initiative,
enterprise and imagination of one man--H. H. Bell. Beyond the Secretary,
there is no officer who has been so closely and intimately associated with
Mr. Bell than myself. Apart from the confidence he has shown in me, what
I have liked most about Mr. Bell is his receptiveness to new ideas, his
readiness to consider all suggestions, his willingness to listen to
objections one might entertain to proposals advanced by himself, and the
welcome he always gave to perfectly frank expressions of opinion, even
when these were against his own ideas. In the latter connection, I am
very certain that ultimately the Chairman never attached much importance
to the views of an officer whom he had found to be a mere "yes-man."

All-night transport, Sunday morning transport, the reduction of
the maximum through fare from 9d. to 6d, the family ticket of 2/6 to
Wattle Park and the beaches, the formation of the Stores Department which
has saved the Board scores of thousands of pounds in overdraft interest
along by reducing the value of the stores held on any one day from
£279,000 to £119,000, the Uniform Branch which has saved us £7,000 a year
and has given the staff better garments, Parliamentary sanction to the
proposal to increase the maximum of our allocation to Reserves during the
war years from 6 to 9 per cent--these are just a few of the ideas which
have made this Board far and away the most successful transport concern
of its kind in the world.

Now over 70 years of age, Mr. Bell is mentally and physically
the equal of men 20 years and more his junior, and I for one will be very
sorry indeed if "The Age" hint that he is to be replaced turns out to be
correct. With warm regards, and asking specially that you remember me to
Petra, believe me,
Yours sincerely,

Levin G. Pennington

On the 31st December next the period of office of the present Melbourne Tramways Board will expire. Under the Chairmanship of Mr. H. H. Bell the board has put up a record of successful administration not even approached far less excelled by any similar undertaking anywhere in the world. Beginning with a loan indebtedness of £4,995,402, it has reduced this to £3,968,783, notwithstanding the fact that the capital cost of the system during these 12 years increased from £8,207,468 to £9,829,954. The Loan Redemption Fund now stands at £1,709,792 as compared with but £892,933 in 1936, while the various Reserve Funds--Renewals, General, Maintenance, Public Risk, Fire and so on--have reached the impressive total of £7,911,013 as against £1,500,533. No wonder the State Auditor-General has indicated his opinion that these funds have now reached a point in excess of the financial requirements of the undertaking. These remarkable improvements in the financial standing of the undertaken have been achieved despite the payments of £1,400,000 to the Consolidated Revenue in respect of the State's contributions to the Fire Brigades Board and the Infectious Diseases Hospital, grants of £225,000 to the municipalities in the tramway area, and £184,948 in the purchase of War Savings Certificates for the members of the staff who served with the Forces during the war