

Nostalgia validated as myki steams over tickets to ride

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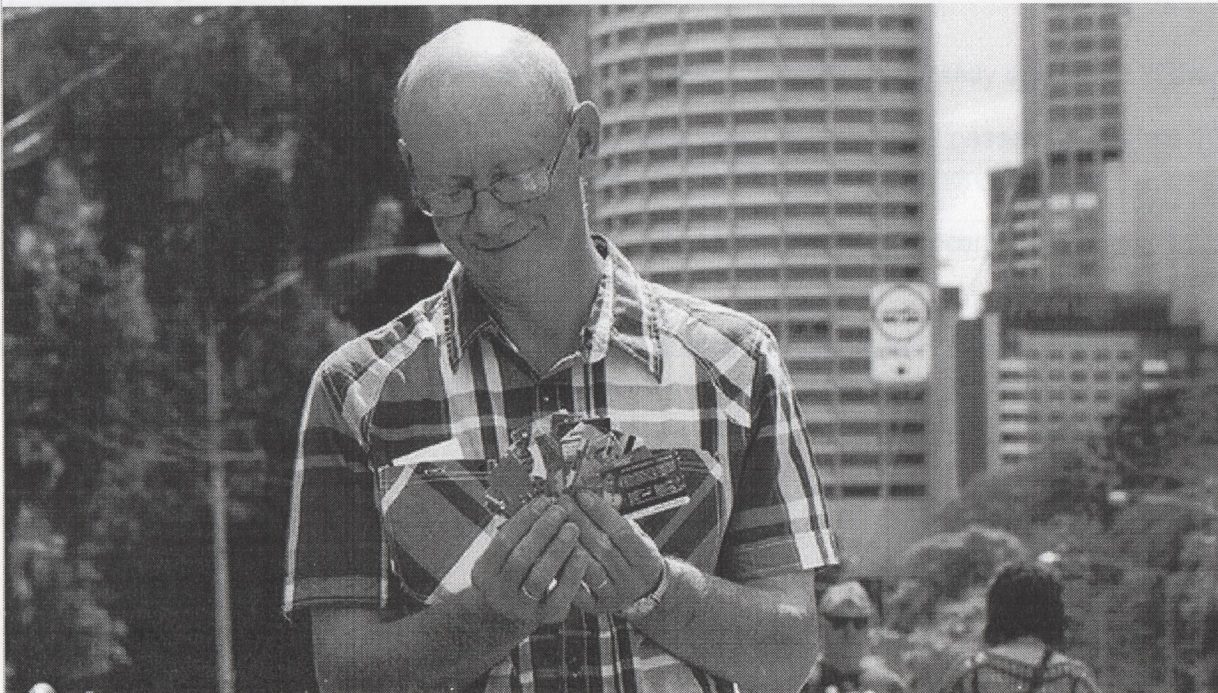
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ticket collector Gary Davey. Photo: Paul Jeffers

SATURDAY will be the first day since 1885 that Melburnians have been unable to buy a ticket on a tram.

As the \$1.5 billion myki system becomes the only way to use the city's public transport system, passengers have transferred around \$400,000 value from their outgoing Metcards.

Transport Ticketing Authority chief executive Bernie Carolan, says most of the hardware, metals and computer components from Metcard machines will be recycled, while other items are kept for museums.

Public Transport Victoria is offering to match every dollar on unused Metcards with a donation to The Smith Family or *The Big Issue*.

Meanwhile, others are asking up to \$1000 for Metcard collections on eBay.

Former tram conductor Gary Davey reckons they are dreaming. The 57-year-old assistant bus operations manager boasts a ticket collection in the hundreds of thousands to go with buses and railway inspection trolleys on his 10-acre property at Drouin, east of Melbourne.

"It's almost like a journey back in time," Mr Davey says. "I've got a train ticket and you look at it and think 'that was issued to somebody in 1884 on a steam train in Bendigo'."

He thought the Metcards would boost his superannuation, "but no one is really interested in them".

Melbourne auctioneer Charles Leski says the big ticket items are early rail passes. In the late 19th century state MPs received first-class, gold-embossed, leather-bound, annual tickets, which still fetch several hundred dollars.

Mr Davey says he will miss the way Metcards reminded Melburnians of upcoming events. "Not only were they collectable or interesting designs, they were also an information system."

Mr Davey has a myki like everyone else, but not by choice. He points to Rome as proof Metcards are not outdated, and bristles at having to illegally travel to a manned station and pay another six dollars to replace his forgotten myki.