

media alert

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Date: Tuesday, 23 April 2002 - draft

Has the wheel turned full circle for Melbourne's public transport system?

Keith Kings, the Melbourne transport historian who has been observing the ongoing changes in the Australian transport industry for some 70 years, will speak on 'The Privatisation of Melbourne's Public Transport: Has The Wheel Turned Full Circle?' when he delivers the second Sir Robert Risson Memorial Lecture, a free public lecture next week organised by RMIT University's business faculty.

Mr Kings will provide a historical overview of Melbourne's public transport from its inception in the 1850s until today, showing the present situation and how we reached the point where we are questioning the future of public transport.

"The late 1990s saw all the Government's public transport network privatised – the biggest single change to public transport in 150 years," said Mr Kings. "With none of Melbourne's public transport network now Government operated, and, as that was the situation 150 years ago, I feel the wheel has turned full circle. Will it go round again?"

The Sir Robert Risson Memorial Lecture honours the contribution of the late Sir Robert Risson (1901-1992), an avid supporter of the tramcar and highly respected transport professional whose name is associated with the development of Melbourne's public transport network. The annual lecture remembers Sir Robert's contribution not only in the field of transport but to management, public administration and the wider community.

Graeme Turnbull, RMIT transport researcher and lecturer in public transport systems, said Sir Robert's considerable influence has led to the ongoing operation of Melbourne's unique multimodal public transport system, of which trams, now seen by many as a cultural icon, are an integral part.

"While Melbourne continues to operate the largest tramway system in the 'English speaking world' and numerous light rail transport systems globally have come into fruition, the recent emergence of segregated busways and transitways as alternatives to light rail in urban areas has and will ensure that debate on our large multi-national, multi-model public transport system is likely to continue," he said.

Keith Kings's lecture is at 5pm on 30 April at RMIT Storey Hall, RMIT University.

WHAT: Free Public Lecture – "The Privatisation of Melbourne's Public Transport:

Has The Wheel Turned Full Circle?'

WHEN: 30 April 2002 at 5pm

WHERE: RMIT Storey Hall, RMIT University, Swanston Street, Melbourne

To arrange an interview with Keith Kings and/or Graeme Turnbull, please contact:





15 May 2002

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Dear Keith

Thank you once again for the effort that you put into the preparation and delivery of the second annual RMIT Sir Robert Risson Memorial Lecture.

I believe that for the second year the event was once again an outstanding success and your address on such a relevant topic was very much appreciated.

Significant numbers of participants have been in contact with Graeme, Joanne and myself to indicate how much they enjoyed the evening and to comment upon the obvious level of preparation that you undertook.

As a transport historian you now have your own very distinctive place in transport history in that you delivered the 2002 Sir Robert Risson Lecture

I know that Graeme Turnbull was most appreciative of the role that you played not only on the evening but also your contribution to the transport industry over such a long period. This factor was also evident in the remarks made by Mike Kennedy during the presentation.

Thank you once again for your significant contribution to the evening.

Yours sincerely

Assoc Professor Jenny Morris

Director

Transport Research Centre



Melbourne's public transport system—has the wheel turned full circle?

By Joanne Holmes

The 2nd Annual Sir Robert Risson Memorial Lecture, named in honour of the contribution of the late Sir Robert Risson (1901 – 1992), was held on 30 April and attended by more than 250 people. The annual lecture, sponsored by the Transport Research Centre and the Faculty of RMIT Business, provides an opportunity each year to profile the work of a significant identity in the transport industry.



This year Keith Kings, a Melbourne transport historian who has been observing the ongoing changes in the Australian transport industry for some 70 years, spoke on 'The Privatisation of Melbourne's Public Transport: Has The Wheel Turned Full Circle?'

Public transport began when the Melbourne and Hobsons Bay United Railway Company officially opened the first steam-operated railway on 12 September 1854, from the City to Sandridge (now Port Melbourne). Many other railway companies built or attempted to build lines over the next few years, however some companies found it financially too difficult.

To stop the railway system from collapsing, "the Government was given power by Parliament to buy and build country lines, and bought the Mt. Alexander Company on 23 May 1856—thus the Victorian Railways came into being, as did Government involvement in Victoria's public transport", Keith said.

Other railway companies opened lines in suburban areas, however Keith stated that "by 1878 all the railways were in government hands and for the next 121 years, all main railways in the state were operated by the Government".

The development of the tramway mirrored that of the railway. The first tram to operate in Melbourne commenced in 1885 by a private company the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus. "However, as with the railway network, the trams were taken over by the government over the period of 1906 to 1922," stated Keith.

For 143 years there was direct Government involvement in Melbourne's public transport, but in 1999 everything changed.

"The late 1990s saw the Government's entire public transport network privatised—the biggest single change to public transport in 150 years," said Keith. "With none of Melbourne's public transport network now Government operated, and, as that was the situation 150 years ago, I feel the wheel has turned full circle. Will it go round again?"

Keith Kings believes that, "the answer is definitely yes", and when asked if it will turn again, or keep on turning, he said, "Time will tell. Melbourne should watch carefully as the private transport system might revert back to being government owned in the future." Image supplied by the Transport Research Centre.

Kind gesture of collegial support

Dr Laura Brearley

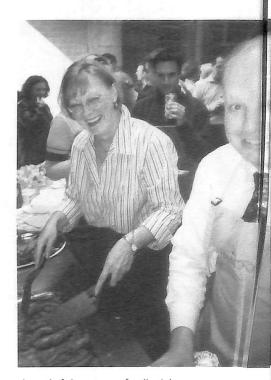
The Figtree Courtyard is a special place at RMIT. Many years ago, a seed from a Moreton Bay fig lodged itself in the top of the high bluestone wall of the Old Melbourne Jail. Its quest for life sent roots down both sides of the wall to find soil, and today, a healthy tree sprouts from the top of the wall. Its roots wind their way down both sides of the wall in a natural sculpture that emanates tenacity, endurance and the will to live.

In early May, a community event was held in the Figtree Courtyard to commemorate the life and achievements of Associate Professor Paul Kennedy. Staff from Property Services invited LTS staff to this lunchtime barbecue as a gesture of friendship and support during a sad time. More than 50 people attended. There was laughter and recognition of how important it was to share memories of Paul.

Chris White, Executive Director of Property Services, warmly welcomed both groups of staff. He acknowledged areas in common between the two services. Property Services has experienced difficult times when involved in large complex projects preparing new buildings. Chris reminded staff how these rough times did eventually pass. He recognised that there may be parallels with the AMS experience and that the tough times would pass there too. Chris acknowledged the contribution of Gail Birchall and other Property Services staff in organising the

Rhys Williams, Manager Strategic Courseware Project, acknowledged the gesture of friendship extended by Property Services to LTS staff. He thanked Property Services for their encouragement and recognition of what LTS is currently dealing with.

The Figtree Courtyard has always been a special place. This



thoughtful gesture of collegial support has made it even more so. Photograph: Staff from Property Services and LTS at the community event held in the Figtree Courtyard. Photograph provided by Dr Laura Brearley.

Marketing students participate in Cadbury Schweppes brand research

By Simon Mallia

Presenting a brand name in a compelling way to key target audiences is one of the main challenges faced by marketing organisations.

The 18 – 24 year old demographic is a desirable yet sometimes illusive audience for companies like Cadbury Schweppes. This year Cadbury Schweppes decided there was no better way to get "under the skin" of this target audience than to go straight to them and find out what they really think. Instead of undertaking traditional forms of research such as focus groups, it

was decided to try something a little different—set some students a problem and see how they respond.

Cadbury Schweppes, in conjunction with advertising agency Brandhouse Arnold Worldwide, invited a group of RMIT Business students from the School of Marketing to participate in a mock brief. Agency and client staff briefed the students, answered their questions and evaluated their responses.

The process exposed students to a "real-life" situation and provided an insight into what to expect when they start work. The students' participation also enabled

Cadbury Schweppes to better understand one of their target audiences for future marketing purposes.

"The work was of a high standard. It is obvious that the students put a lot of hard work and effort into their responses," said Gabrielle Sheehan, Planning Director from Brandhouse Arnold Worldwide.

"We found this to be very enlightening experience and hope the students gained as much from the processes as we did," added Esh Ediriweera, Senior Brand Manager from Cadbury Schweppes.

Professional Practice Mentor Conference

By Dr Bill Eckersley and Helen Dougiakis

More than 180 educators participated in a Professional Practice Mentor Conference held by the Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services at the Australian Education Building (AEU) in Abbotsford recently.

Early childhood, primary and adult teachers engaged with RMIT staff in a series of professional development and networking activities. Professor Bob Lingard (School of Education, University of Queensland) presented the keynote address. His paper, "Reforming Schools through Productive Pedagogies" focussed on how productive pedagogies can be used to reform schools through the creation of professional learning

communities for teachers that operate both in and outside of schools. Much of his research was based on a large three-year longitudinal study—the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS) commissioned by Education Queensland (1998 – 2001).

Teachers and students from
Roxburgh Homestead and Roberts
McCubbin primary schools,
Hawthorn West Preschool,
Methodist Ladies' College Kindle,
Lalor Adult Multicultural Education
Services and Donvale Living and
Learning Centre co-facilitated
interesting sessions that provided
some valuable insights into their
programs.

The Conference concluded with a series of session electives presented by RMIT staff that addressed issues including information and communication technologies; mentoring; critical literacy and numeracy skills; behaviour management/guidance and the application of technologies in learning. Throughout the day mentors met in their Professional Practice Community groups reflecting on the presentations, clarifying understandings of Professional Practice and networking.

A second follow-up Professional Practice Mentor Conference is to be held 14 August at the AEU Building. Special thanks to Ed Credit and the AEU for their support in hosting the Conference. Main picture: Joan Gilchrist (4th from the left) lecturer, Department of School and Early Inset: Childhood FELCS working with Western Professional Practice Community mentors

(Left to right) Prof Nicola Yelland, Head of School and Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services, Professor Bob Lingard, University of Queensland and Dr Bill Eckersley, Head of School and Early Childhood Education, Facof Education, Language and Community Services. Photographs by Helen Dougiakis.





Expert view: Keith Kings ponders the future of public transport in Melbourne. Picture: TONY GOUGH. N46PP303

Swift tram rescue is cut to the quick

by MATTHEW SCHULZ

CAMBERWELL transport historian Keith Kings has warned that Melbourne's private transport system faces a crisis unless it can speed up the service, such as through the plan for Tram 109 in Cotham and Whitehorse roads to Mont Albert.

That plan will give the modern low-floor French-built trams priority on roads and at traffic lights, and provide raised stops for better pram and wheelchair access at key sites on the route from Port Melbourne.

Route 109, which ends at Mont Albert, is being extended to Box Hill.

Mr Kings, who presented the Sir Robert Risson Memorial lecture on public transport to an audience at RMIT earlier this year, told *Progress Leader* that tram passenger numbers had halved in the past 50 years to about 116 million each year.

Sir Robert Risson was chairman of Melbourne's Tramways Board from 1949 to 1970.

A former board employee, Mr Kings, now 73, said that in the past

year the situation for the transport system had become "critical".

"The companies operating the trains and trams are not doing too well ... they didn't foresee the costs of vandalism, traffic congestion and ticketing," Mr Kings said.

The State Government pays National Express, Connex and Yarra Trams about \$400 million a year to run trains, trams and buses, with bonuses when they can prove patronage and punctuality is up.

But Mr Kings believed one of the biggest hurdles to their continued viability was Melbourne's traffic gridlock, creating a catch-22 scenario in which crawling trams encouraged more people into cars, which created more traffic, which discouraged commuters further.

"Keeping a tram in a traffic jam is costing everyone money," he said.

He said a key issue was whether the "radical" Tram 109 experiment, designed to speed commuter travel at the expense of road traffic, was "allowed to proceed" in the face of protests by residents and Whitehorse Council.

While he said the change would be as dramatic as removing

conductors from trams, and bound to "ruffle a few feathers", it could halt the loss of tram users.

He said Melbourne should shift its policies towards public transport bias to improve traffic issues in the metropolitan area.

"It's much more economic to move people in public transport than through lots of smaller vehicles with limited capacity," he said.

Yarra Trams, behind the 109 proposal, backed many of Mr Kings' comments.

Spokeswoman Kate De Clercq said the company was an active supporter of tram priority at traffic lights, which was being considered for the 109 route.

"If we make the tram network more modern, reliable, more frequent and with better punctuality, people will start to consider it as a real option for the way they travel.

"We're fighting a system that gives priority to the car. We think if we can put more emphasis on the tram we can make it a better service – and more attractive."

She said both passengers and the Government were generally "very enthusiastic" about the 109 improvements.

Crisis warning on public transport

by MATTHEW SCHULZ

TRANSPORT historian Keith Kings has warned that Melbourne's private transport system faces a crisis unless it can speed up the service.

And he said initiatives must be allowed to go ahead on tram route 109, including plans to give trams priority at traffic lights, and build raised stops for pram and wheelchair access.

Route 109 currently ends at Mont Albert and is being extended to Box Hill.

Mr Kings presented the Sir Robert Risson Memorial lecture on public transport at RMIT this year and said tram passenger numbers had halved in the past 50 years.

Mr Kings, 73, worked at the Melbourne Tramways Board in the early 1950s, but has been watching the city's public transport system for a decade. * 7

He said the transport situation was critical.

He said one of the biggest hurdles was Melbourne's traffic gridlock, creating a catch-22 scenario in which slow trams encouraged more people to drive, which created even more traffic.

He said a key issue was whether the route 109 experiment, designed to speed commuter travel at the expense of road traffic, would be

allowed to proceed, despite protests from residents and Whitehorse Council.

The change could stop people abandoning trams, he said.

He said priority should be given to public transport to improve traffic issues.

"It's much more economic to move people in public transport than through lots of smaller vehicles with limited capacity," he said.

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