

# 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 multi-modal 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.*

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| <b>WHAT:</b>  | <b>Free Public Lecture – "The Privatisation of Melbourne's Public Transport: Has The Wheel Turned Full Circle?"</b> |
| <b>WHEN:</b>  | <b>30 April 2002 at 5pm</b>   |
| <b>WHERE:</b> | <b>RMIT Storey Hall, RMIT University, Swanston Street, Melbourne</b>  |

**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.

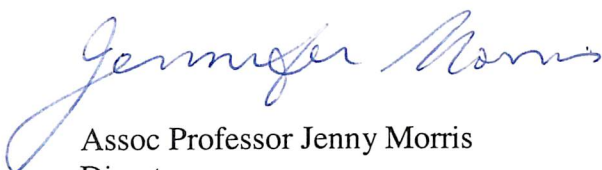
Significant numbers of participants have been in contact with Graeme, Joanne and myself to indicate how much they enjoyed the evening and to comment upon the obvious level of preparation that you undertook.

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

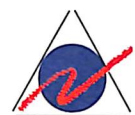
I know that Graeme Turnbull was most appreciative of the role that you played not only on the evening but also your contribution to the transport industry over such a long period. This factor was also evident in the remarks made by Mike Kennedy during the presentation.

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

Yours sincerely



Assoc Professor Jenny Morris  
Director  
Transport Research Centre









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.

WHITEHOUSE  
LEADER.

18/9/02

\*For many  
decades not  
just one ↓

# 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.

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

Spokeswoman Kate De Clercq said the company actively supported tram priority at traffic lights