



Photo by Juan Marulanda

Will Acland Street Be Eaten By PTV Trams?

The future of Acland Street and the St Kilda Village Precinct, one of Melbourne's most loved dining, shopping and family destinations, is under threat as a result of an alliance between Yarra Trams, Public Transport Victoria (PTV), Port Phillip Council and the Victorian State Government.

Without properly engaged community and local traders consultation, and despite repeated calls by local traders for a more detailed assessment, a decision in principle has been made to introduce monster E Class trams to run the length of Acland Street and close the street to traffic. In order to accommodate these new trams, the largest of their kind ever introduced into Melbourne's tramways system, separation barriers will be constructed at various points along the street, effectively compromising access to both sides of the street.

Acland Street has welcomed people for generations; from some of the earliest arrivals to the Colony, to new immigrants, refugees, bohemians, artists, business people and families, but never before has this icon been treated like it is today. There is no regard for its rich and enduring heritage.

The sheer length of these super-sized trams – measuring 33m from end to end and 2.5m wide on a street that is barely 300m long – means they will dominate as well as divide the street. This will be highlighted by the frequency of their service – anywhere from every 4 to 10 minutes. Two of these trams, end to end, will amount to nearly 25% of the entire street and they will be ever-present!

Under the Port Phillip Council endorsed Route 96 Proposal, car parking will be removed from Acland Street and through traffic diverted into two side streets that are ill-equipped to cope with the increasing demands. Not only will this change the dynamic of the street for traders, shoppers and diners, it will also create hardship for people with a disability and those with mobility issues, such as parents with children in prams. Furthermore, there are no plans to replace these parking spaces elsewhere,

leading to a significantly increased revenue potential for the council and a diminished opportunity for exposed traders.

Because of the proposed footpath works and landscaping, some traders will no longer be able to offer alfresco dining and whilst works are carried out local traders could face disruptions to their businesses of 3-6 months or more, which could cause them to close down. Acland Street without the choice of on-street dining that is currently on offer would put the Precinct at a distinct disadvantage compared to other shopping strips in the area.

"Our request is to keep the status quo and build a super stop opposite Luna Park, which is better suited as a long-term solution," says Palma Smith – President of the St Kilda Village Traders Association.

Ms Smith said that PTV's argument about growth in demand for the 96 route could easily be accommodated by keeping the existing 96A tram running from the DDA compliant stop outside Luna Park along Acland Street to Barkly Street and return. This would not impact on the use of the E Class trams on the remainder of the route.

The St Kilda Village Traders Group has presented a counter proposal outlining its concerns and a better, more mutually agreeable alternative. Its major grievance is the lack of empirical evidence to support the position that has currently been endorsed.

Ms Smith outlines five matters of concern raised by the traders that have not been addressed by PTV, Yarra Trams, or the State Government:

1. There is no traffic management report which would detail the impact the works will have on traders. Among the key issues is what effect the loss of car parking will have on trading.
2. No car parking or pedestrian traffic surveys during peak trading times have been carried out.

3. There has been no consideration for how the absence of parking spaces in Acland Street will influence visitors, especially people with a disability and parents with prams who prefer to drive.

4. Traders have not been provided with any scale plans which set out the detailed design of the works – including the proposed footpath works and landscaping along Acland Street.

5. No evidence has been put forward which details why Acland Street, which is heavily occupied by trading businesses and relatively narrow in width, is the appropriate location for the proposed super stop, rather than what would appear the more convenient, unoccupied and logical location opposite Luna Park, located only metres away.

Port Phillip Council has made a decision on the designs that were presented by PTV late 2013. They have not advised formally how they made their final decision without reference to the matters of concern raised by traders, including the building of a tram terminus in a small commercial environment which is fundamentally flawed if it is executed.

"If this proposal succeeds, we believe it will be the death of Acland Street as we know it," Ms Smith says, *"We were subject to a similar experiment in 2003. The loss of trade was immediate and there's no reason to suggest there will be anything different this time. Fortunately it ended before too much damage was done; this time the works will be much more significant and irreversible".*

"Losing the confidence of visitors is the kiss of death for a precinct like ours. We sincerely hope that Yarra Trams, Public Transport Victoria (PTV), Port Phillip Council and the Victorian State Government recognise this and reconsider our proposal, thus avoiding similar damage that has already been inflicted in every other street precinct where PTV has already commenced its ill-conceived infrastructure overhaul".

The association is encouraging concerned residents, traders and visitors to voice their concerns. Please contact them via www.facebook.com/stkildavillage to support the traders by petition. ■

ACLAND ST IS THIS THE FINAL HOUR?

Yarra Trams, Public Transport Victoria (PTV) and Port Phillip Council are planning to significantly change our much loved Acland Street in early 2015.

They intend to remove all cars from Acland Street which will mean **NO THROUGH TRAFFIC** and **NO PARKING**, even for the disabled!

The impacts and disruption to business – both short and long-term are going to be significant if the proposal isn't stopped.

At Risk are:

- Loss of thousands of Jobs
- Loss of tens of millions of commerce and tourism dollars to our economy
- Loss of a Victorian cultural icon
- Business viability

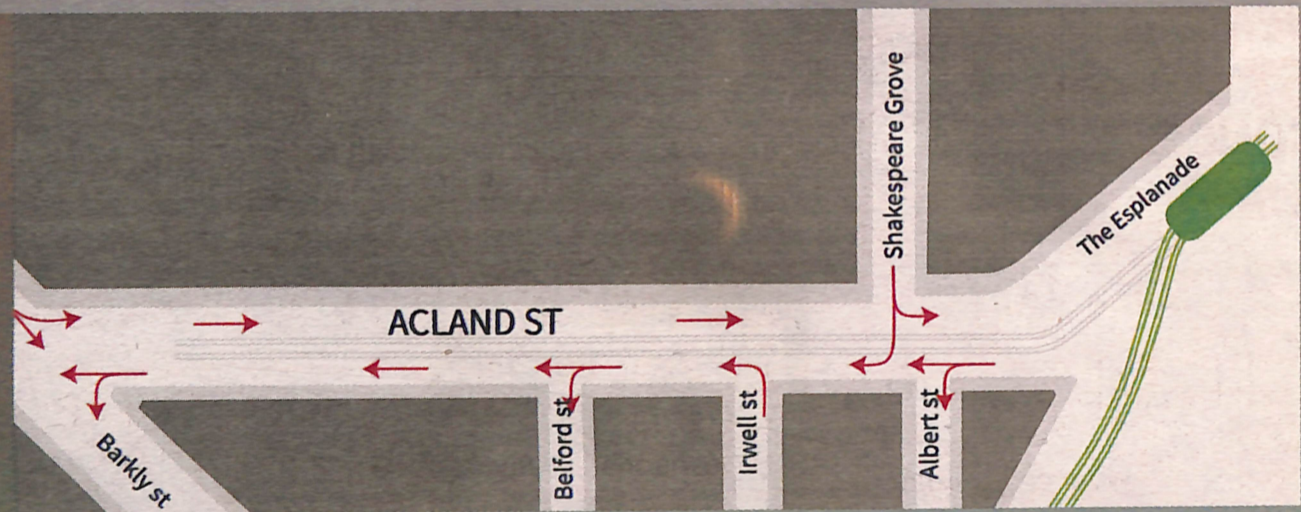
Acland Street Traders urgently need our community support for their preferred Option – being a fully compliant Super Stop outside Luna Park and minimal change to the street the way it currently operates.

All voters are in the running for a
Day in St Kilda Prize Pack – Valued at \$1000

Text which Option you support:

Simply by sending an **SMS to: 0416 380 773**

OPTION A:
Traders Option



OPTION B:
Port Phillip City
Council Proposal

