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GOVERNMENT ACTS TO SECURE THE FUTURE OF W CLASS TRAMS

All 53 W-Class trams are set return to operational service but will run on a restricted number of routes, Transport Minister Peter Batchelor announced today.

“Following a review of W-Class tram operational safety by the Director of Public Transport Safety, W-Class trams have been cleared for operations on standard route services, subject to a number of restrictions,” Mr Batchelor said.

“From the end of November, the traditional green W-Class trams will service route 30 along La Trobe Street from St Vincent’s Plaza to Spencer Street with an extension into the Docklands.

“W-Class trams will also be returned to route 78 and 79 services along Church and Chapel Streets.

“The popular free City Circle tram service will continue uninterrupted.

“This deployment will maintain their high visibility in Melbourne, and will enable a number of key tourist precincts to be serviced.”

There are 53 W-Class trams remaining in operational condition and all will be actively rotated on these routes, with up to 25 in operation at any given time.

“However, due to safety restrictions, the W-Class trams will not be returning to route 8 (Toorak Rd to Melbourne University), route 12 from the City to South Melbourne (including Collins St) or route 16 from St Kilda Beach to the University,” Mr Batchelor said.

The Director of Public Transport Safety has determined that W-Class trams are able to operate subject to the following restrictions:

- Operation with limited interface with other trams,
- Retention of current maximum speed restrictions – 40km/h,
- Dedicated drivers with specialist training,
- Installation of speedometers; and
- Installation of pantographs (used on more modern trams) to remove the risk to drivers when leaving the tram cab to reset trolley poles.

“As part of the franchise renegotiation process currently being undertaken with Yarra Trams, the Government is also considering whether W-Class tram services could be extended, consistent with the Director of Public Transport Safety’s requirements,” Mr Batchelor said.

In June 2000, the 53 W-Class trams that remained in the Melbourne tram fleet were temporarily withdrawn from service after a series of accidents.

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After a detailed technical review, all 53 W-Class trams have been fitted with new modern braking systems. W-Class trams resumed the City Circle service in May 2001 fitted with a new electro-magnetic braking system operating under restricted speed and interface conditions.

A further review of their crash-worthiness has resulted in the operating restrictions specified by the Director of Public Transport Safety.

"The process to return these vehicles to operational service has been longer than the Government wished, but it has been important that a thorough review of all operational and safety matters take place," Mr Batchelor said.

"The initiatives taken by the Government now ensures that these trams, which are up to 60 years old, will be able to continue to operate on Melbourne's tram network."

Following a review of W-Class tram crash-worthiness, the Director of Public Transport Safety, W-Class trams have been fitted with new modern braking systems, subject to a number of restrictions," Mr Batchelor said.

"From the end of November, the traditional green line service from the City Circle to South Melbourne Street from 11.30am to 11.55am will be replaced by a new service from the City Circle to South Melbourne Street from 11.30am to 11.55am.

"W-Class trams will still be required to operate at a restricted speed and interface conditions."

The popular inner city tram line service will continue to operate.

"This development will ensure that the W-Class trams remain in Melbourne, and will ensure a number of key safety products to be replaced."

However, all 53 W-Class trams will be replaced with modern trams and all will be actively rolled on their tracks, with no trams off-line at any given time.

However, the safety restrictions, the W-Class trams will not be operating in the City Circle, North Melbourne Street (N1), and 12 from the City to South Melbourne (including Collins St) or some routes in East Melbourne in the University," Mr Batchelor said.

The Director of Public Transport Safety has determined that W-Class trams are not to operate subject to the following restrictions:

- Operation with limited interface with other trams.
- Reduction of speed with speed restrictions - 10km/h.
- Dedicated routes with special signage.
- Installation of speed-restricting devices.
- Installation of emergency brakes on more modern trams is enough to deal with them when leaving the track at road safety points.

As part of the tram fleet renewal process currently being undertaken with Yanki Trams, the Government is also considering whether W-Class tram services could be extended, consistent with the Director of Public Transport Safety's requirements," Mr Batchelor said.

In June 2001, the 53 W-Class trams that remained in the Melbourne tram fleet were temporarily withdrawn from service after a series of accidents.