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TOWN HALL.

19/9/34.

10th August, 1934.

MEMO.

Chairman,
Traffic and Building Regulations Committee.

Visit to Sydney of Deputy Town Clerk and Chief By-laws and Prosecuting Officer

In accordance with the authority given by the Committee we visited Sydney during the present week and conducted enquiries into the running of the trolley buses in that City having regard to the proposal for the conversion to electric traction of the cable trams in Elizabeth Street.

We observed the running of the trolley buses under peak loading conditions and also under normal loading.

There are only two trolley buses in operation in Sydney. They are used on a short run of approximately 1½ miles and maintain a 15 minute service each way. Their weight is 7 tons 6 cwt. (unladen) and they have six wheels. Their normal carrying capacity is 34 seated and 25 standing, although we were informed that on one occasion a total load of 80 persons was carried. Steps are now taken however to prevent such overloading in future.

A new double deck trolley bus is now being constructed in Sydney and is nearing completion. The seating capacity of this vehicle is approximately 60 persons but it is not designed for standing passengers, there being insufficient head room on either the lower or the upper deck.

The greatest features connected with the trolley buses are their flexibility, riding comfort, smoothness, absence of noise, and quick acceleration.

For the greater portion of their route the Sydney trolley buses are operated in streets that are already served by tramways. In one thoroughfare in particular we observed seven tramway rails, (three of which are unused) and trolley buses were also in operation.

The trolley buses are very popular with the Sydney public and we were informed that since their advent many business men who previously motored each day to the City have now adopted the trolley bus as their mode of transit.

There is no City terminus for these buses and turning difficulties are not therefore encountered. The buses follow a route in the City by which they turn left from one street to another and thus join up to their return route by a loop without actually turning. At the suburban terminus, however, the buses are required to turn and they do so at a branch street. The bus is simply driven a few yards down the branch street until the trolley poles pass a set of points (frogs). The bus then reverses and is turned similarly to any ordinary motor vehicle. The actual time taken in turning is a very few seconds and the width of the two streets in which the turn is effected is about 30' each.

The route followed by the buses embraces two right hand turns and although we observed this closely on many occasions we failed to see any difficulties whatsoever in negotiating the turn and no undue interference to other traffic was caused. It is proposed to extend the route into the City proper by taking the vehicles into George Street, thence making a left turn loop and rejoining the present route at the Museum Station.

The overhead wiring for trolley buses in rather unsightly, and according to information obtained by us, is considerably more costly than the overhead gear for electric trams. The trolley buses require two overhead wires for each side of the Street.

In negotiating turnings, and in crossing other tram tracks care is necessary to avoid dewiring. We learned that in the early stages of the operation of these buses, dewirings caused considerable trouble and delays, as many as four and five per day being common. Adjustments were made to the trolleys, however, and dewirings are now very rare, none whatever having taken place during the past month.

A feature of these buses is their mobility as they can swing to right or left a distance of approximately 11 feet from their straight route. This enables them to draw into the kerb or to pass obstructions reaching out on to the roadway about 25 feet from kerb.

In the case of breakdown of a trolley bus no trouble is caused to other traffic or other buses. The disabled bus is simply removed to the kerb to allow the other buses to proceed and a towing vehicle takes the disabled bus to the workshops for repair.

After studying the operation of these vehicles we have arrived at the conclusion that they are eminently suitable for routes that provide an even loading but that they are not so suitable where heavy peak loading conditions exist.

With regard to the question of the adoption of trolley buses for Elizabeth Street, we are reluctantly of opinion that they would not be suitable. We say reluctantly as it would be pleasing to us to advocate this system of transport in preference to electric trams if it were at all possible, in view of the many advantages that trolley buses possess by reason of their mobility and flexibility, and the safety by which they are boarded by passengers at the kerb instead of in the centre of streets, thus obviating the necessity for safety zones with their consequent reduction of available vehicular road space.

We do not think that it would be advisable to turn them at the Elizabeth Street-Flinders Street intersection as some congestion would be caused although the turning operation is not of lengthy duration. If they were adopted for Elizabeth Street, however, we consider that no serious congestion would be caused by routing them through to South Melbourne by turning to the right into Flinders Street at the intersection of Elizabeth Street, thence left over Queen's Bridge and returning via the same route, the left hand turn being made from Flinders Street to Elizabeth Street. Our observations in Sydney showed us that such turnings can be made without reasonable objection thereto.

In Sydney Road Brunswick the trolley buses would, in our opinion, be more desirable than trams from a traffic standpoint as they would not cause the same congestion on account of their mobility. We consider, however, that they would not transport the peak load in Elizabeth Street as satisfactorily as would electric trams.

Regard must also be had to the question of road construction and maintenance under a trolley bus system as the weight of these vehicles exceeds 7 tons (unladen) and between 10 and 11 tons laden. Some agreement would probably be necessary between the several Municipal

Councils and the Tramways Board regarding the cost of construction and maintenance of roadways.

It must also be realized that the removal of the tramway track from the centre of the road would necessitate the construction and maintenance of that width of roadway (19') by Municipal Councils, and in addition the Municipalities would probably be deprived of the rates that are now paid by the Tramway Board on its tramway tracks.

The trolley bus is a most desirable transport vehicle, but after fully considering its many advantages we are unable to recommend the Committee to advocate its adoption for Elizabeth Street in preference to electric trams.

VEHICLE ACTUATED TRAFFIC CONTROL -

We took advantage of our visit to study the operations of the vehicle actuated traffic control device which has been installed at the intersection of Kent Street and Market Street, and we are definitely of opinion that for busy intersections that are not traversed by trams this system is very valuable.

Its main advantage over the automatic signals in Melbourne is that it avoids delays, and provides the maximum clearance for traffic from the busier street to pass the intersection, while it also provides most satisfactorily for the intermittent traffic from the other street. The system provides for definite safety if drivers observe the lights.

If a Bridge is erected at Punt Road the installation of this system at the intersection of Alexandra Avenue and Punt Road would undoubtedly overcome any argument that the provision of such a bridge would constitute a danger point.

The Sydney Agents for this apparatus (Automatic Telephone Co.) have undertaken to look into the question of the installation of the system in Melbourne at an intersection to be agreed upon.

PARKING CONDITIONS

It is immediately apparent to any Melbourne visitor to Sydney that the Melbourne motorist receives considerably more consideration than does the Sydney motorist. Parking is absolutely prohibited in the City, but in a few isolated streets located (excepting Martin Place) some distance from the centre of the City motorists are permitted to park up to 30 minutes. There does not appear to be any definite administration of the 30 minute allowance, and in consequence the very limited accommodation provided is full to capacity early in the day and affords very little assistance to motorists who are desirous of using their cars for business in the City.

TRAFFIC GENERALLY

Traffic in Sydney is controlled by the Police Department, and in the course of conversation with responsible officials we were informed that they would welcome a system similar to Melbourne which would ensure the co-operation of the Sydney Council with the Police Department in traffic matters.

The traffic is well handled in Sydney but the system followed could not possible operate in Melbourne. Notwithstanding its narrower streets Sydney traffic clears more easily than Melbourne traffic, the main reason therefor being that is is not restricted, as is the case in Melbourne, to one or two outlets but is spread over a large area

with a greater number of "getaways". The rounding off of corners very materially assists traffic at intersections, and it would be advisable for a modified system of rounding corners to be adopted in Melbourne.

Safety zones in Sydney are denoted by posts painted yellow and black and they vary in width according to the proximity of the safety zone to a railway station or such like where large numbers of pedestrians congregate. There are no raised or railed safety zones and all standards are removed at night time.

Trams and motor buses are controlled by the Commissioner for Transport who also registers all taxi-cabs and ordinary motor vehicles and drivers, the test of drivers for licences being conducted by the Police Department. The charges by taxi drivers in Sydney vary considerably, ranging from 8d. to 1/3d. per mile.

Some traffic notices are provided by Police Department, some by the Transport Commissioner and some by the City Council.

Our visit to Sydney proved most informative and we desire to thank the Committee for affording us the opportunity of making the trip and thus enabling us to make a study of the conditions in comparison with Melbourne.

(Signed) H. S. WOOTON
Deputy Town Clerk.

(Signed) M. M. O'Toole
Chief By-laws and
Prosecuting Officer.