



MELBOURNE  
TRAM MUSEUM

# The Bellcord

*Journal of the Melbourne Tram Museum  
Number 63 – September 2024*



**Front cover**

Victorian Railways tram no 41 at St Kilda station in the 1930s. The tram is on a short run to Dickens Street, from where it will shunt back to the station.

This tram has been preserved by Melbourne Tramcar Preservation Association and is currently on long term loan to the Ballarat Tramway Museum.

Photograph from the Public Transport Photo Collection, Public Record Office Victoria.

## In this issue

The current upgrade of the Victoria and Swanston Streets precinct will improve cross-town connectivity for Melbourne’s tram network. Mal Rowe describes the first cross-town track connection at this location built in 1927 by the newly formed Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board. It was one of several early works to connect the various separated electric tramways after their recent amalgamation.

The Melbourne Tram Museum recently received a donation of fascinating items associated with Norman Boucher – a motorman on the Victorian Railways St Kilda to Brighton tram line and active in the Australian Railways Union during a tumultuous period for industrial relations. Warren Doubleday and Noelle Jones provide a brief background.

Another recent acquisition gives insight into the daily running of electric tramcars on 28 February 1939 – just six months before the outbreak of World War II. Warren Doubleday describes what happened on that day 85 years ago on the tram network, as well as outlining national and international events.

We were greatly saddened to hear of the passing of Norm Cross – noted public transport enthusiast and long-time member of the Melbourne Tram Museum. Adam Chandler looks back on Norm’s life.

Plus latest news about the museum and Melbourne’s tram network.

Enjoy reading!

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*The Bellcord* is published by the Melbourne Tram Museum Inc, A0048167Z, ABN 11 293 508 607.

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Editor: Noelle Jones

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## Open House Melbourne 2024

Despite two days of exceptionally bleak weather, the museum hosted over 1300 visitors during the Open House Melbourne weekend. The museum also featured in various media coverage, the highlight being a segment on 7NEWS.

Coffee from Pookie May proved very popular for warding off the winter chill.

## Group visits

The museum continues to be in demand as an excursion for a wide range of groups, young and old. As the weather improves over the next few months our volunteer guides will be kept busy during scheduled museum open days.

## Volunteers needed for mid-week open days

Our popularity also means that we need more volunteers to assist, in particular for our Wednesday open days – the next is on 25 September. If you can help out, please contact [info@trammuseum.org.au](mailto:info@trammuseum.org.au).

## Museum shop

With newly installed carpet, the museum shop is now looking very smart. The shop stocks a huge range of tram-themed items – ideal as gifts or for Melbourne souvenirs. Note that museum members receive a 10% discount on new books.

## Annual General Meeting

Save the date! The museum's Annual General Meeting is scheduled for Saturday 12 October. Details will be emailed soon to museum members.

## Last tram out of the North Fitzroy Depot

Carlton Community History Group has posted a [short article and video clip](#) of W7 class tram no 1031 departing the former North Fitzroy Depot where it had been in storage since 2014. Of the six trams that were housed at North Fitzroy, two are now located at the Ballarat Tram Museum's offsite storage at Bungaree and the remainder are at the Bendigo Tramways store.

*Popular museum guide Kevin Tierney with visitors at Open House Melbourne, July 2024. Photograph by Mal Rowe.*



# Around the tracks

**New tram franchise operator** – On 28 June the Minister for Public and Active Transport, Gabrielle Williams, announced that the consortium of Transdev and John Holland was awarded a \$6.8 billion contract to operate the Melbourne tram network for the next nine years, from 1 December 2024. Transdev had been in partnership with Transfield to operate Yarra Trams from 29 August 1999 when the system had two operators; the other operator was National Express M>Tram. After taking over the whole system in 2004, Transdev operated Yarra Trams until November 2009 when it lost the franchise to the current operator Keolis Downer.

**Maidstone Tram Depot construction** – Steelwork for the new depot building is being positioned and work continues on the site. During August work to widen the northern end of Hampstead Road was undertaken. This was to allow for the installation of new tram tracks during November.

**Route 82 tram stops** – A recent consultation document from the Department of Transport and Planning shows plans to provide accessible tram stops in the Footscray area. The document notes that no funding is currently available for these works but will be dependent on budget processes. A similar consultation was undertaken for route 86 tram stops in Gertrude and Smith Streets Fitzroy and High Street Preston.

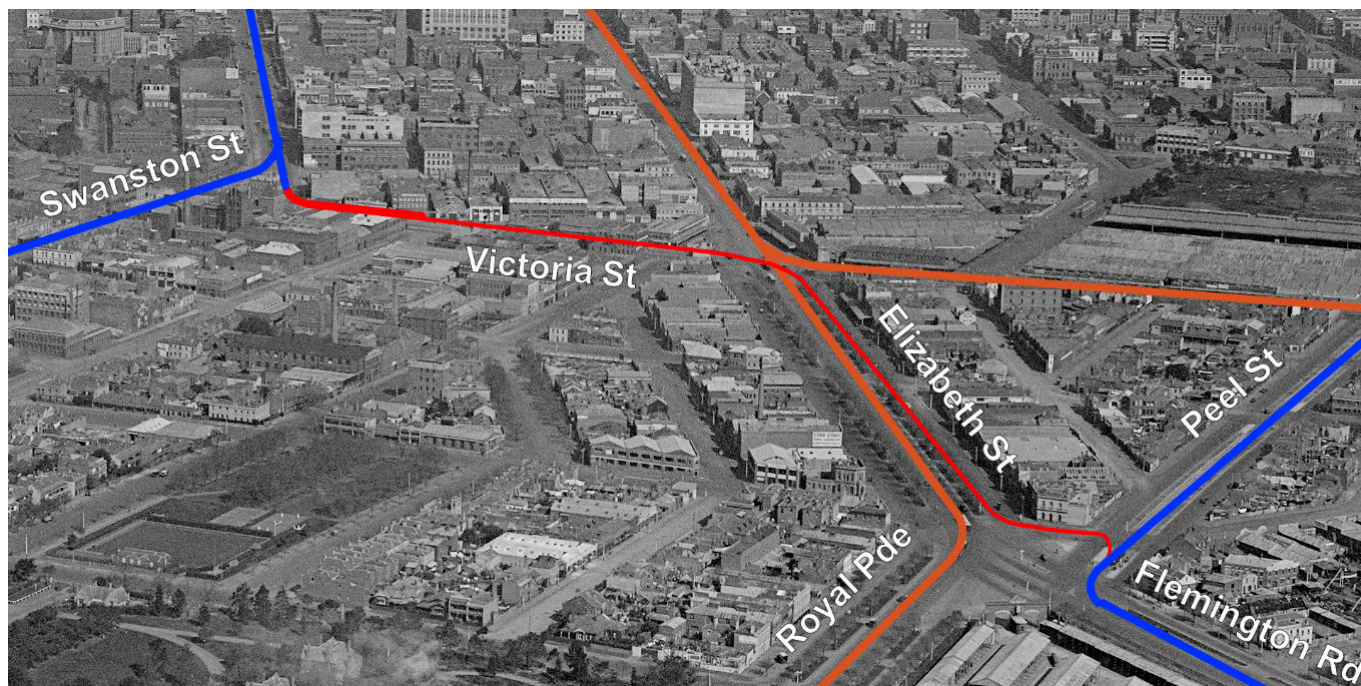
**La Trobe Street tram stops** – During July and August, La Trobe Street was closed for the installation of accessible platform tram stops. When completed, there will be fewer than four tram stops in the city area that are not accessible – the principal one being the Elizabeth Street terminus.

**Brunswick depot expansion** – Work to move the staff car park to underneath the elevated section of the Upfield Rail line continues. Expansion of the depot tracks in the yard area has commenced.



*View from the north of construction underway at the new Maidstone Depot, 19 August 2024.*

*Photograph by Mal Rowe.*



## Linking up Melbourne's electric trams

The original foundations of Melbourne's current tram network were the cable tramways of the Melbourne Tramway & Omnibus Company (MTOC). These cable tramways were built over a six year period, between 1885 and 1891, and in 1891 covered most of the settled area of Melbourne with over 70km of track. An extension to one of the MTOC lines was built by the Northcote Cable Tram Company.

By the early 1900s settlement had extended well beyond the reach of the cable tram lines and some extensions operated by horse drawn trams. To meet demand seven separate organisations built electric tramways on the then fringes of Melbourne between 1906 and 1920.

In 1919 the Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board (M&MTB) was formed to amalgamate all except the Victorian Railways trams, to create a consolidated and unified tramway system. The M&MTB acquired most of the lines in 1920 and purchased the privately-owned North Melbourne Electric Tramways & Lighting Co tramway operations in 1922.

### Making the connections – Northern and Eastern

A map of Melbourne's electric tramways as at the formation of the M&MTB in 1919 shows a huge gap in the middle where the cable tramways occupied nearly all the available streets leading into the central city. Coburg electric trams came down the north end of Swanston Street (then known as Madeline Street) only as far as Queensberry Street in Carlton. Hawthorn trams travelled along Batman Avenue to the edge of the city at Princes Bridge.

*Above: This picture illustrates the route of what was intended to be a temporary link connecting the Essendon tramways with the rest of the system. It opened for service on 1 February 1927. Cable tramways are shown in brown, electric tramways in blue and the link in red.*

*The base image is from a Pratt Airspy photograph in the collection of the State Library of Victoria dated between 1925 and 1926.*

*Image prepared by Mal Rowe.*

In April 1923, the cable tramway in Swanston Street between Lonsdale Street and Queensberry Street was converted to electric trams, allowing the Coburg trams to enter the city. There were still no track connections between any of the electric tramway systems – a situation which the M&MTB sought to address.

In July 1923 a new tramway was built by the M&MTB from the Kew tram depot southwest along Church Street to meet with the former Hawthorn Tramways Trust (HTT) tramway at Burwood Road and connect with the Bridge Road cable trams. This provided the first connection between the two tramways operations then known as the 'Eastern System'.

In 1925, the M&MTB built a tramway along Holden Street and Brunswick Road connecting the two operations known until 1923 as the 'Northern system' – the Preston electric tramway in St Georges Road and the Coburg electric tramway in Lygon Street. (This was described in detail by Geoff Brown, Brian Weedon and Warren Doubleday in *The Bellcord No 50*).

In that same year, the North Melbourne tramway in Flemington Road from Flemington Bridge to Abbotsford Street was converted from cable to electric traction. This connected the Essendon tramways with the new electric tramway from West Brunswick (later West Coburg) and entered the city via Flemington Road, Peel Street and William Street, terminating at Collins Street. There was no resulting connection with other electric tramways.

The largest conversion project to date commenced on 26 December 1925 and saw the entire cable tramway down Swanston Street, St Kilda Road, High Street and Brighton Road converted to electric tramway. It opened to electric tram traffic in Swanston Street on 24 January 1926 and the project was finished with permanent track all the way to Glen Huntly Road by 29 August 1926.

*This original clipping from The Argus of 23 November 1926 is in the collection of the Melbourne Tram Museum. The photograph looks south from Victoria Street along Swanston Street and shows work on building the new connection. The existing terminus at Franklin Street is behind the motor truck and the City Baths are in the background at left. In 1928 a tramway signal box, designed by tramway architect A.G. Monsborough, was built on the small island in the midground of the photograph.*



Original clipping from The Sun News-Pictorial, 30 November 1926, in the collection of the Melbourne Tram Museum. The photograph is looking west from Swanston Street and shows work on the new double track tramway in Victoria Street.

The end of the double track is at Bouverie Street in the middle of the photograph. Victoria Market is visible at the left in the distance and cable trams can be seen turning from Elizabeth Street into Victoria Street.



The Preston and Coburg trams were already connected via Lygon Street to Swanston Street. Conversion of Swanston Street allowed through running between the former Northern and Eastern systems.

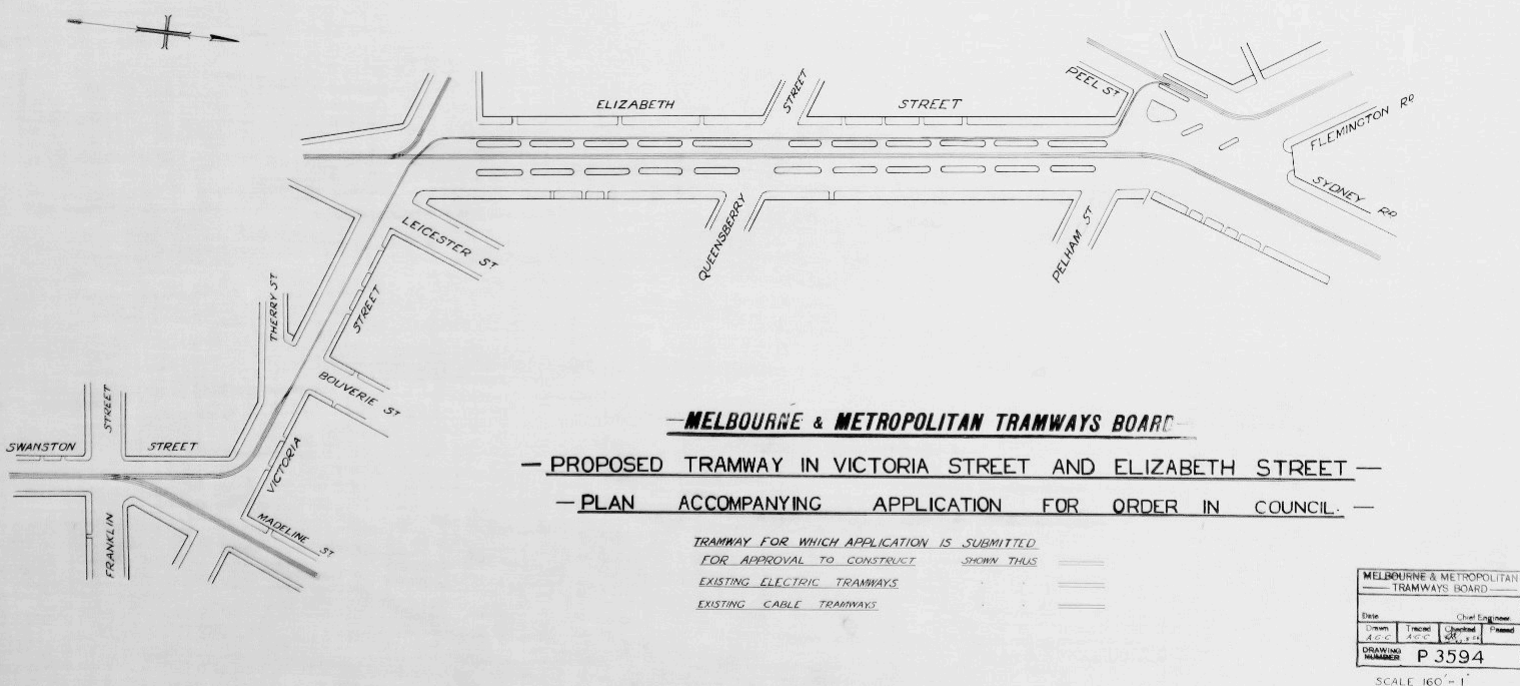
As a result of the conversion program nearly all of Melbourne's electric tramways were connected from early 1926. However, the Essendon and Footscray lines were still isolated.

### Making the Essendon connection

In April 1926 a short siding was installed near the corner of Swanston Street and Victoria Street, branching off at Franklin Street and terminating at Victoria Street. It was to be used as a terminus for trams not through routed to the Northern lines.

The map below accompanied the 1926 request for an Order in Council for approval of the temporary tramway.

From the collection of the Melbourne Tram Museum.



*In this original clipping from The Argus of 25 November 1926, in the collection of the Melbourne Tram Museum, the photograph looks northwest from Elizabeth Street towards Peel Street. Three tower wagons are assisting with the erection of overhead. The roadway adjacent to the plantation at the bottom slightly right of centre is the location of the new tramway.*

*The building at rear of the tower wagons is the former Turf Club Hotel.*



The Brunswick and (truncated) North Melbourne cable tramways still operated in Elizabeth Street and would not be converted for some years. The M&MTB applied to the State Government for permission to install a temporary electric tramway to connect the Essendon lines with Swanston Street through the back streets of Carlton via Pelham, Berkeley and Leicester Streets. This was approved by an Order in Council on 17 November 1926, but with a less complex route via Elizabeth and Victoria Streets.

The temporary tramway started from Peel Street immediately south of a crossover near the junction with Flemington Road. The crossover was relocated slightly to the north to be clear of the new Elizabeth Street branch. A single track branched off the southbound track in Peel Street and ran down the western side carriageway of Elizabeth Street beside the plantation. The Order in Council specified that this section was to be unpaved in open ballast except at intersections and that it was to be protected by suitable kerbing.

This temporary tramway crossed the cable tramway to enter Victoria Street, being 'shoe-horned' between a cable tram crossover in Elizabeth Street and a pit containing large sheaves which allowed the Brunswick cable to terminate and the North Melbourne cable to turn the corner into Elizabeth Street. At the intersection of Bouverie Street it opened up to double track and then turned to join with the Victoria Street terminus of the Swanston Street lines. The line was built by day labour and was opened for service on 1 February 1927. It was never intended to carry passengers but simply to enable the transfer of trams to and from Essendon. However, the M&MTB submission for the Order in Council stated: "The portion of the track in Victoria Street will be of a permanent nature, and will eventually form portion of a cross-town tramway route along Victoria Street."

The onset of an economic depression saw a delay in the conversion of the Elizabeth Street cable tramways and the temporary line remained in service until that conversion in 1935, when the 'temporary tramway' was removed after eight years of use.



**Postscript I – 1954**

The Footscray tramways remained isolated from the rest of Melbourne’s network, despite tramway extensions during World War II. They were finally connected to the main system in 1954.

**Postscript II – 2024**

Part of the ‘cross-town tramway’ envisaged in 1925 is now in place, with work completed on 17 September 2024. The tramway from Swanston Street into Victoria Street was removed from the slip road connecting the two, replaced by a curve at the main intersection. The tramway will later be continued across the intersection of Victoria Street at Elizabeth Street. These changes enable the benefit of a small city park on the southwest corner of Swanston Street and Victoria Street and the potential for route 57 trams from West Maribyrnong to travel down Swanston Street and possibly be combined with routes in the south branching from St Kilda Road.

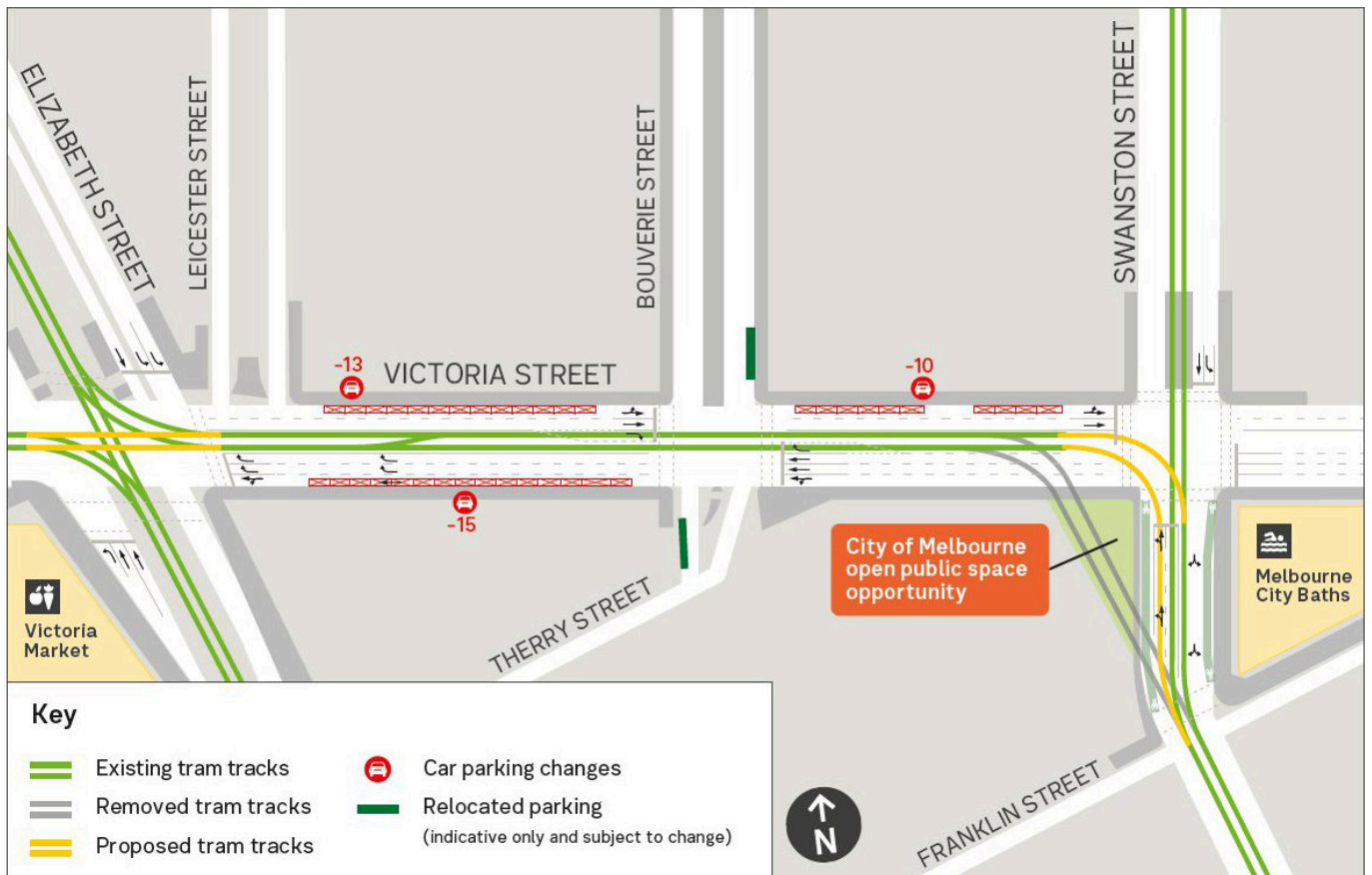
*Below: A plan from the Department of Transport and Planning shows the new layout around Victoria, Swanston and Elizabeth Streets.*

*There is to be a triple track tramway in Swanston Street opposite the City Baths. The tramway crossing Elizabeth Street in Victoria Street will be installed later.*

**Thanks and acknowledgements**

It is always a delight to prepare material for *The Bellcord*. I am particularly grateful for a great deal of advice and shared research from Brian Weedon. Geoff Brown and Warren Doubleday contributed advice and their knowledge. Noelle Jones is to be congratulated on her editorial skills in making content more consistent and readable.

Mal Rowe



# Norman Boucher: ARU President, Tramways Division

While operational staff at the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board (M&MTB) were represented by the Australian Tramways & Motor Omnibus Employees' Association (ATMOEA), motormen and conductors on the Victorian Railways tramways were represented by the Australian Railways Union (ARU).



The Melbourne Tram Museum recently received this magnificent illuminated address originally presented to Norman Boucher in 1947. The images at the base of the item include photographs of a train hauled by locomotive A2 945, Unity Hall (headquarters of the Victorian Branch of the ARU and other unions from 1916 to 1999, now the Alto Hotel on Bourke), and a Tait electric train (these trains were finally withdrawn from service in December 1984).

The ARU was an industrial trade union, formed in 1920. It had several divisions serving operational workers such as guards, shunters and signalmen, as well as tramway motormen and conductors. However locomotive and electric train crews were represented by the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Employees (AFULE). The four public transport unions – ATMOEA, ARU, AFULE and the National Union of Rail Workers of Australia (NURWA) – merged in 1993, being renamed the Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) in 1998.

The five-year period after World War II was a challenging time for industrial relations and there were a number of mostly short stoppages over this time. Workers were seeking improvements in conditions, after many years of restraint – firstly as a result of the economic depression of the 1930s, which was then followed by wartime austerity.

The mid-1940s also saw the peak in popularity of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), which increased its influence in a number of trade unions, including the Victorian branch of the ARU. Officers in the ARU at that time were a mix of the left and the right wings of the labour movement.

The nine-day rail and tram strike of October 1946 – supported by both the ARU and the ATMOEA – was the first major railway stoppage in 43 years. It led to the award of weekend penalty rates and three weeks' annual leave. The tram strike of January 1948 resulted in the Victorian State Government introducing the Essential Services Act.

In 1947 the President of the Tramways Division of the ARU was Norman Charles Boucher (1905-63). Boucher was a motorman on VR's St Kilda to Brighton line, based at Elwood depot. He was a member of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) Industrial Group, which was aligned with B.A. Santamaria's Catholic Social Studies Movement ('The Movement').

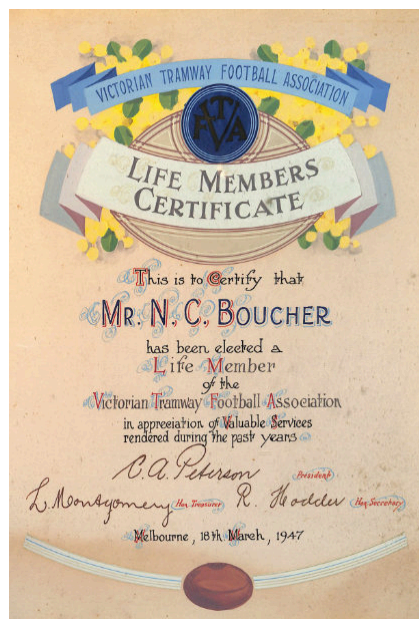
*This photograph of the Brighton-Glen Huntly football team, taken at a match against Clifton Hill at Westgarth on 17 May 1933, was donated to the Melbourne Tram Museum by Boucher's son Geoff.*

*Back row, left to right: Haughton, Carter, J Swallowell, L Mitchell, J Cosson, N Capp, T Barber, W Eccles.*

*Centre row, left to right: J Brown, Huston, Chandler, J Loftus, J Lawley (vice captain), N Boucher.*

*Front row, left to right: G Slade, J Richards (captain), WJ Sheldon, H Bird.*





*Victorian Tramway Football Association Life Members Certificate awarded to Norman Boucher in March 1947. Now in the collection of the Melbourne Tram Museum.*

## Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Geoff Boucher, Isaac Hermann and Russell Jones. Thanks also to the Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Library of Australia (Trove) and Public Record Office Victoria without which this research would not have been possible.

For more background, see 'The Victorian railways strike of 1950: a study in public sector enterprise bargaining before its time', *Provenance: The Journal of Public Record Office Victoria*, issue no. 15, 2016–2017.

By 1950 support for left wing militancy within the ARU was waning – a forerunner to the events that eventually led to the 1955 split within the ALP. Unlike the success of the 1946 strike, the 1950 railway strike over overtime conditions achieved only partial gains for union members. At 53 days, from 16 October to 8 December 1950, it was the longest railway strike in Victoria's history, involving both the ARU and the AFULE. Only after the Victorian Government threatened deregistration of the two unions did the ARU move to end the strike.

In 1952 and 1953 Boucher was elected unopposed as an organiser within the ARU, suggesting that he was considered a popular choice. ALP Industrial Group candidates dominated the 1953 election, resulting in 44 nominees on the ARU council, compared with just eight CPA-aligned nominees.

Born in Matlock, 140km northeast of Melbourne, Boucher joined VR on 12 October 1921, aged 16. In VR's 1923 list of employees, his position was 'lad' in the Transportation Branch, with salary of 6 shillings and 6 pence. He was still designated a 'lad' in 1925, but with a higher salary – 11 shillings and 10 pence. By 1 January 1929 Boucher had become a tram conductor, with salary 15 shillings and 9 pence, later being promoted to motorman.

Boucher was also a footballer – he was a member of the M&MTB's Glen Huntly depot team from 1927, the first year in which Glen Huntly fielded a team in the Victorian Tramway Football Association (VTFA). By the mid-1930s the team was known as Brighton-Glen Huntly, recognising that it included players from both the VR tramways as well as the M&MTB. Boucher was a team member until 1936, when he received an award at the presentation night of the Brighton-Glen Huntly tramway football club.

After his playing career ended, Boucher remained active with the VTFA. He acted as a goal umpire and in 1939 was elected to the committee of the Brighton-Glen Huntly team. In 1947 Boucher was awarded a life membership of the VTFA.

One of Boucher's teammates at Brighton-Glen Huntly in the 1930s was John Joseph (Jack) Brown (1912-89), trade unionist, who became State Secretary and Federal President of the ARU. A fitness fanatic who set world records in skipping at the Victorian Railways Institute gym, Brown joined the CPA in 1935. He was elected to the ARU State Council in 1936. Brown served as State secretary in 1942 to 1954 and then from 1956 until 1975, when he was appointed to the VR Board.

Around 1956 when sections of the VR St Kilda to Brighton Beach tram line were being closed, Boucher was re-located to Flinders Street railway station, where he worked in the Lost Property Office.

Boucher passed away in 1963, aged 57.

*Warren Doubleday and Noelle Jones*

# On this day: 28 February 1939

Each day, the Superintendent of the Electric Running Sheds prepared a one-page operational report which was then distributed to senior officers of the Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board (M&MTB). The report for 28 February 1939 was recently donated to the Melbourne Tram Museum. It was a momentous period in history – just six months later the country was at war after several years of economic depression. So what was notable on that particular day, 85 years ago?

The snapshot report summarises the number of tramcars at each of the eleven electric tram depots. Cable cars still had some 18 months to run before being replaced by buses. Of those eleven depots, Coburg, Footscray, Hanna Street, Hawthorn and Preston have since been closed or relocated.

The list is divided into bogie trams – almost entirely W class with some maximum traction bogie trams – and single truck (ST) or four wheel trams (ORD, or 'ordinary'). Single trucks were generally used for all-night-tram (AN) services, except at Footscray where they were the only type of tram based at that depot. The report also shows that the M&MTB had more trams available than needed – always a good situation to be in.

*M&MTB W2 class no 449 on route 55 to West Coburg, north bound in William Street, about to cross Little Lonsdale Street, March 1966. This tram was taken out of service on 28 February 1939 due to a broken window.*

*Photograph by Keith Caldwell, in the collection of the Melbourne Tram Museum.*



Superintendent of Electric Running Sheds' daily return for 28 February 1939. In the collection of the Melbourne Tram Museum.

Form 3/312—July, 1938—6000 MELBOURNE AND METROPOLITAN TRAMWAYS BOARD

**SUPERINTENDENT OF ELECTRIC RUNNING SHEDS' DAILY RETURN**

State of Weather Fine. Day Tuesday Date 28th February 1939.  
 Any Special Traffic Conditions Normal.

**CAR STOCKS**

DEPOT	Cars in Stock		Required		Available		Not Available			
	Bogie	S.T.	Bogie	S.T.	Bogie	S.T.	In Depot		In Workshops	
							Bogie	S.T.	Bogie	S.T.
Malvern	ORD.	79	1	71		72	1			7
	AN.									
Hawthorn	ORD.	42	1	36		39	1			3
	AN.									
Camberwell	ORD.	59	1	57		58	1			1
	AN.		3		1		3			
Glenhnutly	ORD.	66	3	60	2	61	3			5
	AN.		2		2		2			
Hanna Street	ORD.	68	1	63		64	1			4
	AN.		2		1		2			
Kew	ORD.	78		72		73				5
	AN.		4		3		4			
Coburg	ORD.	32		31		32				
	AN.									
Essendon	ORD.	59		54		57				2
	AN.		4		3		4			
Preston	ORD.	41	2	38	2	40	2			1
	AN.									
Footscray	ORD.		15		10		13		2	
	AN.									
Brunswick	ORD.	53		48		51				2
	AN.		4		3		4			
<b>TOTAL</b>		577	43	530	27	547	41		2	30

**CARS TAKEN OUT OF TRAFFIC**

Date	Car Number	Depot	Defect Stated	Defect Found
Feb. 28th.	449	Mal.	Broken window.	
"	222	Cam.	Air.	Water in governor.
"	803	HS.	Collision.	
"	785	Ess.	Passgr. sick in car.	
"	370	Pres.	Broken window.	

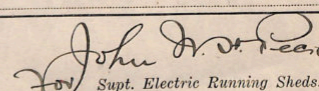
**FIRE APPLIANCES O.K. AT DEPOTS** ALL.

Defective \_\_\_\_\_ Contractor Notified from \_\_\_\_\_  
 Time \_\_\_\_\_ By \_\_\_\_\_

**WATCHMAN'S TELL TALE** ALL.

O.K. at Depots \_\_\_\_\_  
 Irregular at Depots \_\_\_\_\_

**REMARKS**

  
 Supt. Electric Running Sheds.

On 28 February 1939, five cars were taken out of service. Two cars suffered broken windows, a passenger was sick in one car, one had a collision and one experienced a fault due to water in the air compressor governor. This device regulates the air pressure in the air tanks for the air braking system – it operates when the air pressure gets low, and switches off the power to the compressor when the pressure reaches the required level.

Just one single collision in a day is low. For comparison, a 1957 M&MTB report notes an average of almost 14 collisions per day. According to a report in the *Herald Sun* on 20 June 2024, Yarra Trams experiences an average of three collisions per day.

The report notes that traffic was normal and the weather on 28 February 1939 was fine. That day had a maximum temperature of 73°F (23°C) – a far cry from some seven weeks earlier when it reached 45.7°C and resulted in the deaths of 71 people in the disastrous bush fires of 13 January 1939.

Fire appliances at the depots are described as ‘OK’: an important safety feature of Melbourne tram depots which were fully sprinklered.

Finally the report notes that the ‘Watchman’s tell tales’ were satisfactory that night. These clocks recorded that a night watchman carried out his rounds at the required intervals (rather than sleeping!). Keys with different symbols would be chained at various points on the round. The night watchman would use these to punch a ‘tell tale’ mark on the recording disc showing the time he visited each station. The clock would be unlocked each day to be checked, wound, and the disc changed to be ready for the next night.

What was happening elsewhere on the tramway system around that date?

- The first of the SW6 class trams, No 850, was receiving its finishing touches at Preston Workshops prior to entering service on 31 March 1939. SW6 trams were fitted with safety glass rather than the ordinary glass used for previous tram classes. Other new innovations fitted to the SW6 class were sliding doors, a Public Address system, dash canopy lighting, red and green indicator lights, lined ceilings and upholstered seats in the saloons.
- Planning for the replacement of the cable trams with buses was underway, in particular for the Bourke Street cable line. This included preparation of specifications for and ordering double deck buses, purchasing materials and lowering the road under the Clifton Hill railway bridge.
- The M&MTB Board minutes for the meetings of 23 February and 2 March 1939 recorded the arrival of the new Bus Superintendent from England, Mr G.J.W. Burkett and the purchase of more land at North Fitzroy for the Central Bus Garage.

*M&MTB W2 No 222 leaving East Preston Depot, April 1968. This tram was taken out of service on 28 February 1939 due to water in the air pressure governor. Photograph by Keith Kings, in the collection of the Melbourne Tram Museum.*



- After an extensive overseas tour, visiting England, Germany, France, North America and New Zealand, the M&MTB Chairman, H.H. Bell, confirmed that the tram will remain the backbone of all street passenger systems.
- Bell also authored an article on Melbourne's public transport system for the 25 February 1939 issue of the UK-based magazine *Modern Transport*. (Museum members can access an [annotated copy](#) of this article in the members' zone of the museum website.)

On 28 February and 1 March 1939 *The Argus* reported that:

- Significant flooding occurred in Gippsland, Victoria's North East and around Melbourne – in contrast to the very dry conditions that led to the bush fires of 13 January.
- Funds were being raised to help bush fire victims.
- The Overland train from Adelaide was three and half hours late due to a cracked tyre on the locomotive. The narrow gauge train to Alice Springs from Port Augusta was affected by many washaways near Alberga and was expected to be a week late. Until the route from Tarcoola to Alice Springs was built such washaways and delays were not unusual. Floods also delayed Sydney to Melbourne trains and those to Geelong.
- As a result of the bushfires, the State's finances were estimated to reach a deficit of £1,000,000 (\$104 million in 2023 dollars) rather than the previously anticipated surplus of £50,000 (\$5.2 million).
- A letter congratulated the M&MTB on the recently inaugurated bus service between Collingwood and Point Ormond.
- A section of the former Punt Road footbridge crashed into the Yarra during demolition works.
- Television, which had been introduced in Britain in 1936, was declared by the Postmaster-General (A.G. Cameron, Member of the House of Representatives and later leader of the Country Party) to be an unnecessary luxury.

*M&MTB SW6 No 850 at the Prahran terminus, corner of Chapel Street and Brighton Road, soon after its construction and entry into traffic on 31 May 1939. This particular tram was the first in its class. Photograph in the collection of the Melbourne Tram Museum.*





- A model of the planned new Royal Melbourne Hospital in Parkville was on display. The hospital was finally opened for public patients in 1944 after being occupied by the US Army for two years.
- The National Insurance proposal was a contentious issue that could have brought down the Federal Government led by Joseph Lyons. The scheme was a system of social security that would have provided medical, disability, unemployment and pension coverage to contributors and their dependants. While the scheme was enacted, it was subsequently abandoned in order to divert funds to Defence. Lyons died of a heart attack in April 1939 and after a short period with a caretaker Government led by Earle Page, Robert Menzies became Prime Minister.
- A Conclave was being held in Rome to elect a new Pope, after the death of Pius XI on 10 February 1939.
- The Civil War in Spain had effectively ended and the Franco-led regime was being recognised by other Governments.
- A visiting mission from Britain was examining Australia's capacity to produce military aircraft.
- Preparations were underway for a possible war with Germany and Japan, including the establishment of a permanent mobile Australian force of 10,000 men by 1944. The British Navy estimated expenditure of over £153 million sterling in 1939 with 40 ships to be completed during the year.

*Luxury interior of the newly built M&MTB SW6 tram no 850. This tram is now in the care of the Melbourne Tram Museum and is awaiting reconstruction.*

*Official M&MTB 1939 photograph by Sutcliffe Pty Ltd, in the collection of the Melbourne Tram Museum.*

*Warren Doubleday*



# In Memoriam: Norm Cross

25.03.1943 – 29.05.2024

Few have made as lasting and understated impact in the history of Melbourne's trams as Norman (Norm) E. Cross. After a long period of illness, Norm passed away in care on 29 May 2024 aged 81, leaving behind a legacy deeply intertwined with our public transport heritage.

Norm was a pre-eminent Melbourne tram and train enthusiast, stalwart of the Preston Tramway Workshops, a committed unionist, and a passionate supporter of the transport preservation movement and the St Kilda Football Club.

*TMSV tour of Preston Workshops, 28 July 1968. Norm is sitting on the side of the traverser. Photograph by Mal Rowe.*

Beloved by his fellow enthusiasts and trammies alike, Norm's manifold efforts to record, preserve and promote the rich history of our tramways also helped secure their place in our shared memory as Melbourne's most recognisable icon.



*Norm had an extraordinary place in his heart for Victorian Railways Luxury Car No. 53. In 2015, with the agreement of the Australian Railway Historical Society at Newport, this tram was placed on display at the Melbourne Tram Museum. A pure-hearted moment was caught one quiet afternoon in June 2015 during an open day at Hawthorn when Norm quietly approached 53 and hugged his old friend. It best exemplifies his deep, abiding appreciation for our trams.*

*Photograph by Adam Chandler.*



Norm's love for trains and trams was almost predestined; his father worked for the Victorian Railways and his childhood home in Northcote overlooked a bustling arterial road with a tramway.

One particular W2 Class tram – 268 – caught young Norm's eye, showing the destination of 'NORTHCOTE—ST GEORGE'S ROAD'. This tram would remain his lifelong favourite, not least because his family home was at 268 St George's Road, Northcote.

As young Norm's interest (and tram memorabilia collection) grew, it was inevitable that he would join the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board (M&MTB). He started work at the nearby Preston Workshops in 1959.

Beginning his career as an apprentice fitter and turner, one of his earliest tasks was working on the broad-to-standard-gauge conversion of tram VR 53, which the M&MTB had recently acquired. To mount the No 15 trucks demanded meticulous attention to detail over several days drilling holes into the underframe.

This would set the tone for his patient dedication to tram maintenance and preservation over nearly five decades at the Preston Workshops, where Norm became known for his technical skills and comprehensive knowledge of Melbourne's trams. He knew every vehicle in the fleet, their histories and their fates after retirement – a wealth of detail he could instantly recall when needed.

Norm worked at Preston during some of its most productive years when hundreds of skilled tradespeople maintained Melbourne's trams in-house. His contributions also extended beyond applying his trade skills: he served as the unofficial historian, newsletter editor and tour guide at the workshops, preserving the stories of older colleagues and ensuring that the history of Melbourne's trams was passed on to future generations.

Norm was renowned as a font of knowledge for enthusiasts, heritage operators and visitors to the 'spiritual home' of Melbourne's trams, helpfully guiding countless multitudes through the workshops, able to answer any and every question.

In this capacity during the mid-1980s, Norm's expertise caught the attention of filmmakers Nadia Tass and David Parker during their visit to the workshops while researching an upcoming film. After a brief introduction, they later visited his home and were struck by his extensive tram memorabilia and scale model collection – quickly realising that in writing their character, Malcolm, they had manifested much of Norm himself!

Norm was enlisted as a consultant and supplied props and tram models for the film, even coaching lead actor Colin Friels in tramway language and jargon. His contributions helped infuse *Malcolm* with the film's most quintessentially Melbourne elements, undoubtedly part of why it became such a beloved Australian cinema classic.

Norm was also a staunch unionist, dedicated to fairness and his colleagues' rights. During the economic downturn of the late 1980s, he played a small but pivotal role in triggering one of Melbourne's most significant tramway industrial actions.

The then-State Government pushed to cut costs by hastily devising a plan to remove tram conductors and introduce a replacement 'scratchie' ticketing system.

Arriving at work one morning in late 1989, Norm noted that trams had been brought to the Workshops overnight and were being worked on by strangers, replacing driver's doors to support one-person tram operation. Norm immediately contacted the union and a picket line was quickly established.

The dispute rapidly escalated. On 1 January 1990, trammies at all depots refused to follow management directions, going on to operate the tram system by themselves – complete with conductors. In response, management decided to lock out the staff by planning to turn down the tram network's electrical power supply later that evening.

Word of this soon leaked and crews rushed to drive all available trams out of each depot, parking them bumper-to-bumper along the central streets of Melbourne's CBD, where they remained for over a month – a powerful symbol of resistance that endured until the end of the dispute.

With a change of government in 1993 came further savage cuts and privatisation. Many of his workshop colleagues were made redundant, which had an immense impact on Norm.

Shortly afterwards, he was reassigned to driving transfer trams to and from the workshops for maintenance, which would regularly take him all over the system, where he would often exchange a friendly wave with fellow trammies from other depots out on the road.

Throughout his career and beyond retirement, Norm contributed to significant tram history books, including the *Destination City* and *Melbourne Tram Book* series and an unpublished compendium covering the detailed history of the entire W Class fleet.

He also compiled a comprehensive autobiography and was a long-term member of both the Puffing Billy Preservation Society and the Melbourne Tram Museum.

Norm's legacy lives on through his extraordinary work to record and preserve the history of Melbourne's trams. His passion, knowledge and advocacy have left an indelible mark on the the story of our city, and we are richer for having known him.

Vale Norm.

*Norm Cross at the Melbourne Tram Museum, July 2015. Photograph by Adam Chandler.*



*Adam Chandler*