4.0 SOCIAL AND RECREATION (THEME 9.1)

4.1 Wartime efforts

During both World Wars 1 and 2 (and to a lesser extent other conflicts) the tramways exercised a strong social responsibility both in supporting the war effort through the enlistment of many staff members and in morale-boosting efforts on the home front. This is commemorated in elaborate honour rolls in several depots. One such honour roll designed by H B Herbert, was unveiled by the Premier Lawson in November 1921 at the MMBW offices. This commemorated the 518 tramway men who enlisted, 71 of whom fell on service aboard and 18 of whom received awards for conspicuous gallantry. A large number of honour boards were specially prepared by the MMTB following World War II, for erecting in all of the depots, workshops and offices. Most of these are now in the Malvern Tramway museum. The Essendon Depot honour board from the first world war, which was erected by the private NMELTCo.

![Figure 67: Honour board from MMTB Head Office (Malvern Tramway Museum)](image)

To cater for shift workers some tram routes extended services to 24 hours a day. Trams were also a popular means of transport for soldiers when in town. Fuel rationing limited the use of private cars and resulted in highly patronised tram services. In order to reduce crush loads and conserve energy, Melburnians were urged to limit their travel to essential business only.

In the Second World War, women were entering a number of male dominated trades due to labour shortages, but there was opposition on the tramways as they were seen as a threat to job security and there was also doubt as to whether women could competently do the work. While not being allowed to drive trams, female conductors proved successful and were employed throughout the war and were paid full men’s wages. The MMTB workshops were also used for

\[169\] *The Argus*, 9 November 1p21, p.12

\[170\] Lenore Frost from Essendon Historical Society is still researching this board’s whereabouts (pers com, Robert Green and Norm Maddock).
construction of pontoons and Bren gun carriers for the war effort. When the war finally ended, the servicemen returned to their positions with the MMTB and the women were retrenched but many women were once again employed by the tramways during the post war boom.

4.2 Industrial relations, Unions and Women

The co-founder of the MT&OCo, F.B. Clapp, was opposed to unionism, and in the early days of the cable trams, sacked 18 employees who tried to start a union, although it is likely that they actually intended to establish the friendly society at the time. This would have been the Mutual Benefit Society, which was ultimately established by the tramways employees had its genesis (like the tramways bands) in the Melbourne Tramway & Omnibus Company when it was established in 1888 to provide assistance through medical, insurance sick and funeral funds.\(^{171}\)

A separate Melbourne Brunswick & Coburg Tramways Club had previously operated within that depot for the same purpose, and it might be assumed the two combined under the MMTB. With a name change to the Tramways Friendly Society a centenary was celebrated in 1988, when it was able to demonstrate a wide range of facilities, including a private hospital for members ‘Vimy House’ first established in 1949 at 25 Queens Road, and then expanding in 1961 into the adjoining property ‘Bathurst.’

In 1970, the society office and hospital in Queens Road was sold and the site of Dr Penfold’s home in Studley Avenue Kew was purchased by the society in 1971 and a new hospital costing a million dollars was erected, to be officially opened by the premier R J Hamer in 1975. This remains the only employee organisation in Australia to have run its own hospital. In 1985 the Karinya Nursing Home in Camberwell was purchased by the society to provide aged accommodation to both tramway members and the general public.\(^{172}\)

The unions were among the most active and militant at times. Their affiliation was with other transport workers, but they maintained a strong independent identity of many decades, as was represented on the elaborately painted banners.

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\(^{171}\) Report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies for the years ending the 31\(^{st}\) December, 1887 and the 31\(^{st}\) December 1888, p.4 (copy provided by Robert Green)

\(^{172}\) Catherine M. Grutzner, Tramways Friendly Cosiety Centenary 1888-1988 A Short history, Tramway Friendly Society Melbourne
The amalgamation of the three rail unions - the all-grades Australian Railways Union (ARU), the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen (AFULE), the small National Union of
Railway Workers (NURWA) - and the Amalgamated Tramways and Motor Omnibus Employees Association (ATMOEA) united some of Australia's oldest and most colourful unions, founders of the Trades and Labor Councils, the Labor Party and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU).

These unions survived catastrophic defeats such as the 1912 Brisbane Tramway Strike and the 1917 Railways Strike in NSW, both of which turned into massive general strikes and social and political confrontations.

Formed in 1910, the Australian Tramway Employees' Association became the Australian Tramway and Motor Omnibus Employees' Association [AT&MOEA] in 1934. When this union was deregistered in 1950 over the one man tram dispute in Melbourne, its members created, within the same year, a new union of the same name.\textsuperscript{173}

ATMOEA represented tramway workers and for a considerable time opposed the hiring of female employees due to the lower wage they were paid. However, during the Second World War women started to be employed by the MMTB as conductors due to severe labour shortages. Preference was given to wives of MMTB employees on active service, followed by wives of other servicemen.

\textbf{Figure 70:} ATEA members of the ESCo with union banner c 1914 depicting P&MTT C class No 30 tram. (Warren Doubleday)

\textsuperscript{173} A Short History of the RTBU. http://www.rtbu-nat.asn.au/
The Melbourne tramways provided an important venue for playing out matters of worker and class struggle. At one point women were practically excluded from employment as social morays and prejudice considered tram drivers, conductors and other roles as male only. Women were confined to... opening the bell punch to empty out the clippings of different coloured card (corresponding to different fares) onto a counting table.\textsuperscript{174}

\textbf{Figure 71: Conductress changing the destination sign on VR tram, St Kilda to Brighton route (State Library of Victoria)}

Lasting until 1993, the AT&MOEA eventually merged with the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen, the National Union of Rail Workers and the Australian Railways Union to form the Australian Rail Tram & Bus Industry Union.\textsuperscript{175} Originally called the Public Transport Union, the name was changed in 1998 to Rail Tram & Bus Union because of the impact of privatisation on the union’s identity.


\textsuperscript{175} http://www.atua.org.au/biogs/ALE0272b.htm
Figure 72: Structure of Public Transport Unions.\textsuperscript{176}

The ultimate face off between the Union and government came in 1990, when the Cain government wanted to introduce a new scratch ticket system, and with it no longer employ ticket conductors. This resulting in one of the most protracted transport strikes Victoria has seen. On January 1, 1990, after a rumour spread workers were to be locked out of the depots, drivers took 250 trams out on the streets and parked them in Melbourne’s CBD in protest. Then transport minister Jim Kennan retaliated by shutting down the power grid. The trams did not budge for 33 days. Ultimately, conductors departed in 1998, the wind down happening over a number of years.\textsuperscript{177}


\textsuperscript{177} ‘Back to days when trams stood still’, The Age, January 16 2010
Figure 73: Union badges in BTM Collection, btm1947 and btm1947 (Warren Doubleday)

Figure 74: Ms Julie Di-Mieri makes her protest on board a tram in the Bourke Street Mall during a public transport stop work, Dec 5, 1989. (Photo: Stuart Hannigan)
Figure 75: For 33 days from January 1, 1990, 250 trams were parked in Melbourne’s CBD streets by striking tram drivers. (Photo: John Lamb)

Figure 76: Australian Rail, Tram and Bus Industry Union Banner during 1990 tram strike.

4.2.1 Tramway Bands

Two brass bands have existed over the course of the history of Melbourne’s Tramways. The first was established by workers of the Melbourne Tramways and Omnibus company. The second initially formed among workers of the P&MTT, and later forming into the Melbourne tramways Band.
Originally known as the ‘Melbourne Tramways Employees Band’, the band was formed in 1888 by the Melbourne Tramway & Omnibus Company. The band members were all serving employees and appear to have been paid for their services. Prior to World War 1, the band was very well known for its regular concerts at the South Melbourne beach. With the development of the individual tramway trusts, formed to implement the suburban electric tram networks, the band’s role was lost to the various bands formed by the new trusts.  

A separate Malvern Tramways Band formed from members of the P&MTT staff while the Coburg Tramways Trust also supported a brass band made up of its staff, and going by the name of the Coburg Tramway Band. Saturday concerts by the Prahran, Malvern and St. Kilda Bands, and the newly formed Tramway Band, made up of 30 P&MTT employees, were inaugurated in 1911 at the Kiosk in Wattle Tree road, with the express purpose of popularising the Burke Road tramline. The Melbourne Tramways Band played mostly on the St Kilda Esplanade in the early 19th century under band master Thomas Wilks.

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179 Prentice, R. H. ‘A Brief History of the Melbourne, Brunswick and Coburg Tramways Trust’ in Running Journal July 1966, Tramway Museum Society of Victoria
180 P&MTT Quarterly report to 30/3/11, 31/12/11, 31/3/12, copy provided by Robert Green.
Following the amalgamation of the MT&OC and the various electric tramway trusts to form the Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board, a core tramways band was once again established in the late 1930’s, involving serving employees from across the network. The band was formed from a core of employees working at the Hanna Street Depot in South Melbourne in 1939, and was initially called the Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Band. It became well known throughout the community for its public performances, particularly its monthly recitals at Wattle Park.\(^{181}\)

In 1986 the band’s name was changed to the Melbourne Transit Band, to reflect the re-organization of Melbourne’s public transport infrastructure. In March 2001 however, the band gained approval to acknowledge its history and return to the name by which it is best recognized - the Melbourne Tramways Band. Although the band retains its strong links with Melbourne’s public transport services, it has long been community based, comprising musicians “who give freely of their time to ensure valued traditions are maintained and to promote the benefits of public transport.”

The Tramways Band now presents two major ensembles: the original brass band and its stage band ‘Transition’. Due mainly to its regular concert commitments, the band’s emphasis is on entertaining rather than contesting and it is able to present a wide range of music from classical to swing and traditional marches.\(^{182}\)

### 4.3 Migrant Experience (Theme 2.6)

The tramways served as an important employment source for post war migrants to Australia. Availability of training, a regular intake and turn-over, and the willingness of the tramways board to forgo the sort of prejudice that limited foreigner’s work opportunities let to a distinctive culture within the tramways.

#### 4.3.1 Recruitment

Obtaining employees of suitable skills was not always straightforward for the tramways. Training was provided on the job, and with greater sophistication of the system in dedicated driver’s schools. In the post war period, patronage grew, and Arbitration Court rulings for the 40 hour week, caused labour shortages, the Board visited London to recruit 1,000 single men between 23 and 30. The Board also purchased three properties for use as guesthouses to provide for the first 12 months lodging for the new recruits. By 1952 up to 729 men had been recruited and the two guesthouses (208 Canterbury Road Camberwell, former Malone’s Family Hotel and 409 Burwood Road Hawthorn ‘Cavendish’ the third was ‘Warwick’ in East Malvern, purchased Nov 1950).\(^{183}\) then operating provided accommodation for 45o. further recruiting was undertaken in 1955 (74 men and women) 1956, (473 recruits since February 1955) and 1947 (214 during the year). Around October 1956, the Immigration Authority took over the role of recruiting until the scheme ceased in July 1957.\(^{184}\)

Further labour shortages occurred in the 1960s, so the Board again sent its employment officer to Britain in November 1963 to recruit conductors there. A display was set up at Victoria House

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\(^{181}\) The Tramways Band, Appearance in South Street Competitions, MMTB Tramway Topics, 7 1948.; 50\(^{th}\) anniversary Wattle Park Recital, 14 April 1991Friends of Wattle Park Newsletter No 8 September 1993 p.6-7. (copies provided by Robert Green)


\(^{183}\) MMTB Annual Report 1951, p.8

\(^{184}\) MMTB recruitment of staff Extracts from Annual Reports of the MMTB ending 30 June 1951-57, transcriptions provided by Robert Green.
London in 1967 to promote recruitment for tram conductors. Other buildings purchased by the tramways for use as hostels included ‘Bundarra’ 15 Grosvenor Crt, Toorak, Hyalite’ 601 Toorak Rd Toorak, and ‘Invercarvon’ Burnett Street St. Kilda.

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4.4 Tourism, Recreation and Trams

4.4.1 Tourist Services

The tourist potential of the tramways was recognised early on in its development. While the cable system served travellers to the beach on the St. Kilda and South Melbourne Lines, the operators were aware of the advantages of developing this trade as it extended patronage beyond the normal peak hours, potentially filled the empty returning trams and provided for weekend revenue services. Special ‘Beach tickets’ and ‘Bath Tickets’ for both tram travel and admittance, were sold from 1893 and remained on sale until 1912. A guide book extolling the benefits of ‘Rambles from the routes’ was also sold.

The Royal Park Horse Tramway relied on a local tourist market to the zoo, while the electric tram system promoted destinations such as St Kilda Esplanade and Luna Park. The Wattle Park Chalet and several other refreshment kiosks were established either directly by the tramways, or as adjuncts to council park facilities.

In 1927 the MMTB inaugurated a special tourist tram service using a specially constructed observation car, running from Batman Avenue to St Kilda Beach via South Yarra, returning via Hawthorn and Kew. While this was short-lived, a new tourist service was commenced using the restored toastrack tram V214, in February 1979, between Princess Bridge and the Hawthorn Depot. Other trams such as X2-767 were also restored at this time to create the beginnings of the heritage fleet. Other innovations included free Sunday travel in 1981, a restored L class service to the zoo, and four Y1 class trams serving trips to St Kilda.

The City Circle free service (route 35) was instigated under Premier Jeff Kennet using restored Y class trams in 1994. The trams were painted in a special maroon and green with yellow and gold

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186 List provided by Robert Green, from unknown source.