



Australian Tourist Commission

*Melbourne is one of the few cities in the English-speaking world where trams are still a regular part of the public transport system. They are also used as restaurants, theatres and shops.*

# A DESIRE NAMED STREET CAR



Australian Tourist Commission

BY JACK GOLDFARB

On a recent concert tour of Australia, pop singer Elton John went shopping in Melbourne for souvenirs. He spotted one of the city's bright green trams trundling along the steel tracks and fancied one. Reportedly paying \$A10,000 for his desired streetcar, Elton took it home to England and set it up in his garden as a teahouse.

While few visitors spend such extravagant sums on mementoes of their trip to Melbourne, nothing could be more typical of Australia's second city than the beloved tramcar.

More than a century ago, an enterprising American, Francis B. Clapp, introduced public transport to Melbourne by organizing a fleet of horse-drawn trams. Clapp later replaced the dobbins with cable traction cars, modelled after the San Francisco hillclimbers. Subsequently, fare-paying Melbourne citizens rode a succession of experimental steam trams, gas trams and battery-driven vehicles, until electric tramcars with overhead power lines took over and became the most successful people-movers of them all.

During World War II, with petrol strictly rationed, electric trams throughout Australia performed admirably, trafficking millions of passengers to and from work at all hours. In Melbourne alone, in 1944-45, the "old green rattlers" and "boneshakers," as they were affectionately called, hauled a billion riders a year. The electric power was generated by Australia's own huge coal reserves.

When the war ended, however, there began a mad rush to dismantle the "old-fashioned" tram system. Sleek, streamlined, more flexible diesel buses were in. Car owners, now in the majority of

Above: Melbourne's 700 trams shift 200,000 commuters a day along 215 kilometres of double track.

Top Left: Tramcar No 442 is the only restaurant tram in the world. The idea was conceived by two hungry businessmen on their way home late one night.

Top Right: A new pop art spruce up for the same "old green rattlers" that hauled half billion people a year around the city during the years of World War II.



**A  
purchaser could  
outlay a  
considerable  
amount of money  
for a system that  
does not even  
come close to  
achieving what  
was hoped for by  
the company  
and claimed by  
the supplier.**

#### Negotiations

Once a particular system has been decided on, negotiations can be entered into in earnest. From the purchaser's point of view there are a number of critical issues that need to be dealt with in the contract documents. If the supplier has already agreed to use the contracts attached to the RFP as a starting point, it will be much easier.

If, however, the supplier is still insisting on its standard agreement being used, then steadfastly resist.

As mentioned earlier, most suppliers' standard agreements are seriously deficient and do not adequately protect the interests of the purchaser. Should the supplier not be moved, the purchaser should find out why. The reason given is often something like "We've always done it this way" or, alternatively, "It's company policy".

As with any contract negotiations, it should be a purchaser's goal to minimise the risk. Provided the supplier is reputable, this can be achieved without prejudicing the supplier.

There is no substitute for adequate investigation before negotiating to buy a particular system, but the following things should be incorporated into the final contract for purchaser protection. Firstly, the contract should have attached as a schedule and as part of the contract all representations the supplier has made about the system, together with any brochures that may have been provided

describing the system's capabilities. Expect some suppliers' faces to turn white at this suggestion. Once the shock has passed ask why the company is not prepared to stand behind the claims that have been made. If the supplier refuses to agree to this request it may be because you're not getting what you've been told you're getting.

Secondly, no computer system should be fully paid for prior to passing what is known as "acceptance testing". This is a post-installation period of usually one month during which the system is put through its paces. The supplier and purchaser should agree on a detailed set of acceptance tests. Make sure that all the components are operationally available for a very high percentage of time. Another critical point to check is that all work stations can fully utilise the system without any "degradation", that is, a slowing down of response time. Secretaries will soon become exasperated if they have to wait 10 to 20 seconds every time they tell the system to carry out an operation. A lowering of productivity will be the end result. Again, a reputable supplier will have no problem with acceptance testing.

Thirdly, if the supplier is providing maintenance services, insist that there be a maximum response time to maintenance requests. There's no point in having the latest in computer systems if every time it breaks down — and be assured it will — you have to wait a day and a half to have it fixed. If this requirement is not met maintenance charges should be lowered and, in flagrant cases, the maintenance agreement cancelled altogether. The supplier should provide maintenance at no cost during acceptance testing.

#### A Final Note

It should be remembered that there are many other issues that will require addressing during negotiations such as compatibility with existing hardware, access to software updates, installation costs and training. But, as a purchaser buying a significant asset, your chances of purchasing a computer system that you're happy with are greatly enhanced simply by applying some of the ideas provided here. Never forget, especially if yours is a major company, they want your business.

#### Footnote:

Carl Rowling is a senior solicitor with the Auckland office of the New Zealand firm Rudd, Watts & Stone and has had considerable experience in computer contracting.

# ONE DAY FREE WITH BUDGET MOTOR HOMES\*



If you book a Budget Motor Home for 7 days, we'll give you one day absolutely free.

To check availability, simply present this advertisement at the Budget Rent a Car airport counter.

Courtesy transport to our depot is provided free!

\* Offer closes 30th September, 1988.

**= Budget =**  
motorhomes  
New Zealand

Auckland International Airport:  
21 Brigade Road. Ph: 275-7139.

Christchurch:  
132 Kilmore St. Ph: 50-707.



Australian households, complained about the lumbering, slow-moving trams. Motoring associations, police and the press campaigned loudly to modernise and speed up traffic. "Look at America," cried the critics, "they're updating and upgrading *their* mass transit systems!" Municipal authorities across Australia yielded to the pressure for progress.

Except in Melbourne. Its wide main streets (some nearly 30 metres across), laid out in checkboard pattern, provided enough room for trams and cars to co-exist. Traditionally conservative, Melbourne people maintained a nostalgic respect for the boomtown years of "Marvellous Melbourne" in the late 19th century. The trams of those days provided the convenient public transport that accelerated the shift of the working classes to healthier suburban areas, an important step in social progress.

Concerned too for the present environment, the city fathers chose to keep their pollution-free trams instead of diesel-powered buses. Today Melbourne remains the only major city in the English-speaking world to have retained its tram system intact.

In recent years that system has been thoroughly revitalised. Suburban routes have been extended. The old green rattlers have made way for smooth-running high-speed streetcars sporting colour combinations of tangerine and chocolate, gold and green. Some trams even became art forms, their exteriors strikingly decorated in vivid pop art designs, the talented work of local art students.

Today nearly 700 trams cruise the network of 215 kilometres of double track and are considered a singular asset, enhancing the city's Victorian quality with a special charm.

Not all of Melbourne's tramcars ply their routine rounds, shuttling their share of the 200,000 passengers a day who commute between the placid leafy suburbs and the central commercial districts. Some trams lead a much more exciting life.

If you take Tramcar No. 442, for instance, you board an elegantly furnished, award-winning restaurant that rolls along the tracks several times a day, serving superb gourmet cuisine. Lunch and tea are offered in the afternoon, but for dinner you must book far in advance for any of the 36 plush velvet seats on this popular evening run. The only restaurant tram in the world, this moveable feast makes a three-hour, 40km trip, roaming, switching and looping through the streets of metropolitan Melbourne, while diners indulge in a leisurely paced, five-course



Australian Tourist Commission

dinner and a flow of spirits, wines and liqueurs.

Operated by a private firm under lease from the Metropolitan Transit Authority, the City of Melbourne restaurant is the realisation of an idea conceived by two hungry businessmen on a late night tram-ride home a few years ago. Now the completely remodelled, 60-year-old passenger tramcar *Melbourne* serves about 10,000 patrons a year such delectables as Victoria pumpkin soup, seafood en cocotte Matthew Flinders, fillet of beef Florentine and coupe Kallista from a compact, aircraft-style kitchen supervised by an ex-Yugoslav master chef.

Another tram leading a dramatic life is the one that recently operated as a mobile theatre. Actors and actresses boarded at designated stops along the route, stepping right into their roles. They played their parts on the floorboard stage and made their exits at subsequent stops to rounds of applause. There was little chance of curtain calls as the tram clanged off. Still other thespians, posing as tram passengers — a rowdy drunk, a bickering married couple — also became part of the performance.

Like old soldiers, old Melbourne trams never die, they just fade from active service and are recruited into new careers. Like the tramcar a well-known television personality uses on specially laid tracks to shuttle him from his private landing strip to his house. Or those converted into fish and chip shops, hothouses, tool storage sheds, even trailer homes. Still others have emigrated abroad to become born-again trolleys, such as the half dozen presently forming a new transit system along Seattle's rejuvenated waterfront.

If trams could talk, one old veteran, No. 980, now a paint storage shop in the Preston maintenance depot, might reminisce about its past glory as queen for a day. Brilliantly illuminated and ornately decorated with the royal insignia, old 980

conveyed Her Royal Highness, Elizabeth II, and Prince Philip through the streets of Melbourne on the couple's post-coronation visit to Australia in 1954.

Melbourne's continuing romance with trams has bred a legion of aficionados who have founded preservation societies, established museums and published encyclopedic volumes on their favourite subject. The Tramway Museum Society (not to be confused with the Tramway Riders Association or Railroad Historical Society) supports three museum sites in the Melbourne area. Dedicated volunteers scrape, repaint and restore antiquated rolling stock. Vintage trams offer rides on little stretches of track for the nostalgia of the older visitors and the amusement of the young.

Zealous tram buffs, like George Wilcock and Arthur Ireland of the Bylands Tramway Museum, can overwhelm the listener with their prodigious knowledge of tram-iana. The talk is of "double bogies", "birneys", "toastracks", "single truck cars". These enthusiasts have the impressive ability to rattle off track records, history and technical data of over 20 different classes and types of tramcars, past and present.

A century of trams in Melbourne has inevitably produced a wealth of folklore: stories of kind-hearted trammie conductors helping pram-pushing mothers down the steps only to be left behind as the trams sped away; of irate suburban landowners cutting power lines across their property because royalty payments were overdue; of generations of youngsters who sat, and still sit, hour by hour on busy streetcorners recording the serial numbers of trams rolling by; of the nervous elderly lady who — when electric trams were first introduced — asked the conductor if she would get a shock by stepping on the track. "No, ma'am," replied the trammie, "only if you put your other foot on the wire up there." 