

## Transport – Public Transport – Tramways

### Melbourne and Suburbs

In the period up to 1919, private enterprise and/or local government in conjunction with the State Government developed and operated the tramway network in metropolitan Melbourne. In January 1919 Royal Assent was given to the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Act, No. 2995. This act brought into being the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board (MMTB). The act gave the Board the authority to assume control of all Melbourne tramways. Over the next 5 years the various tramways operating in Melbourne were integrated into the MMTB operations.

The Board continued to operate the system until 1983 when the government of the day amalgamated metropolitan rail and train services under the Metropolitan Transit Authority ([VA 1044](#)). In 1925 the Board began operating bus services.

### The Records

Records held by Public Record Office Victoria are those that were created by the different tramway boards, companies and trusts and transferred in the late 1980s. The records relate, in the main, to the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board. The records of other tramways bodies are those that were inherited by the Board and still held at the time of transfer.

The records document the development of the tramway system and the management and operation of the individual tramway bodies. On the management/operational side there are some records that document staff employed by the bodies. It should be noted that the records of each body do not cover each of these areas. For example there are no employment records for the Hawthorn or Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trusts. The following provides a summary of the board types of records held by Public Record Office Victoria for each body.

- Melbourne Tramways and Omnibus Company Limited 1877 – 1919 ([VA 2976](#))  
[Accounting; Construction; Contracts; Director's reports; Employee; Engineering]
- Melbourne Tramways Trust 1884 – 1916 ([VA 2692](#))  
[Accounting; Correspondence; Contracts; Minutes]
- North Melbourne Electric Tramways and Lighting Company 1904 – 1922 ([VA 2974](#))  
[Correspondence; General subject files]
- Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust 1907 – 1920 ([VA 2977](#))  
[Accounting; Construction; Correspondence; Minutes]
- Hawthorn Tramways Trust 1914 – 1920 ([VA 2978](#))  
[Accounting; Construction; Correspondence; General subject files; Minutes]
- Melbourne, Brunswick and Coburg Tramways 1914 – 1920 ([VA 2971](#))  
[Accounting; Correspondence; Employee; Minutes]
- Fitzroy, Northcote and Preston Tramways Trust 1915 – 1920 ([VA 2972](#))  
[Accounting; Correspondence; Minutes]
- Footscray Tramways Trust 1916 – 1920 ([VA 2973](#))  
[Accounting; Correspondence; Minutes]
- Northcote Municipality Cable Tramways 1916-1920 ([VA 520](#))  
[Accounting; Operations]
- Tramways Board 1916 – 1919 ([VA 2693](#))  
[Accounting; Employee; Minutes; Reports]
- Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board 1919 – 1983 ([VA 2694](#))  
[Accounting; Contracts; Correspondence; Employee; Minutes]

## Some Relevant Record Series

- Tramways Employees Record Book 1885 – 1924 ([VPRS 12738](#))  
This series has self-indexed volumes
- Register of Employee Vacations 1912 – 1916 ([VPRS 7888](#))
- Employment History Cards of Tramways and Bus Employees c1910- 1983 ([VPRS 12741](#))
- Employee Service Register: Northern System 1916 – 1922 ([VPRS 7922](#))
- List of Employees Enlisted for Active Service (1914-1918) ([VPRS 7894](#))

It is recommended that researchers consult the series descriptions on [PROV's Online Catalogue](#) to access information about these series.

## Country Victoria

Tramways are known to have operated in Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong. Initially these systems were developed and operated by private enterprise in Geelong and Bendigo whilst the Ballarat system was operated by the Ballarat City Council before being taken over by private enterprise. During the 1930s these systems were acquired by the State Electricity Commission of Victoria ([VA 1002](#)). The Commission continued to operate the systems until 1956 when the Geelong network closed, followed by the closure of the Ballarat and Bendigo systems in 1971 and 1972 respectively.

Few records of the country systems have survived. Within the State Electricity Commission of Victoria series, Alpha-Numeric Correspondence Files (Supply Registry) ([VPRS 9817/P1](#)) are two files relating to the Ballarat and Bendigo tramways. The Public Record Office Victoria's Ballarat Archives Centre holds a Ballarat Tramways Wages Book 1902 – 1918 ([VPRS 3599](#)).

Geelong Historical Records Centre holds two series that relate to the Geelong tramways.  
Geelong Tramways : Geelong street tram construction papers 1914-1916 (GRS 300)  
State Electricity Commission - Geelong : News cuttings books - tramways 1906-1919 (GRS 498).

## Tramway Photographs

The Public Record Office Victoria holds a collection of Tramway photographic images. A project is underway to place these images online. Researchers can consult [PROVguide 69 Public Transport Corporation Photographic Collection Online](#).

Researchers can also search the "Pictures Catalogue" at the State Library of Victoria ([www.slv.vic.gov.au](http://www.slv.vic.gov.au)) or "Picture Australia" ([www.pictureaustralia.org](http://www.pictureaustralia.org)). "Picture Australia" is an Internet based service developed by the National Library of Australia that allows you to search a number of significant online collections of images at the same time. When you undertake a search using "Picture Australia", you are in fact searching the collections of the participating institutions.

## Published Sources

The following is a brief list of published sources on Melbourne tramways that may be useful to researchers. Please note: these resources are not held at PROV.

Cranston, Jack, 1988, *The Melbourne Cable Trams 1885-1940*, Craftsman Publishing, Melbourne.  
Fiddian, Marc, 1993, *Clang Clang Clang : a Study of Melbourne's Tramways*, Pakenham Gazette, Pakenham, Victoria.  
Green, Robert, 1989, *The First Electric Road: a History of the Box Hill and Doncaster Tramway*, John Mason Press, East Brighton, Victoria.  
Keating, J.D., 1970, *Mind the Curve!*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.  
Metropolitan Transit Authority 1985, *100 Years of Melbourne's Trams*, Melbourne Transit Authority, Melbourne, Victoria.  
O'Neil, David J., 1994, *History of the Geelong Electric Tramways 1912-1956*, self-published, Geelong, Victoria.  
*The Journal of the Tramway Museum Society of Victoria, Running Journal* has been published since 1964 and contains many useful articles. The Society's website can be found at [www.tmsv.org.au](http://www.tmsv.org.au).