

Vicroads Association

Newsletter No.205



Membership of the Association is available to all who have been members of VicRoads or forerunner organisations or the spouse of deceased members and bestows on them all the rights of the Rules of Association. Current cost of membership is a once only fee of \$30 plus a joining fee of \$5. Enquiries about membership or receipt of the Newsletter by e-mail should be directed to the Secretary at 60 Denmark Street Kew 3101 or by phone or e-mail as shown in the footer below.

Dear Members,

I am writing this newsletter early in July even though you won't see it until September. As I mentioned in the last newsletter, I will be away most of August so I need to write it now – because in September I will need to write November's newsletter because I will be in Japan most of October. Do you understand that? Doesn't really matter if you don't. But it prompts me to be lazy regarding the introduction so I thought I would go back to my memoir regarding finding work at the CRB. This is what I wrote – with a little bit of editing.

'In 1960 I completed my studies in civil engineering but I was still fairly naïve about what engineers really did, and I certainly had no idea of what I wanted to do and how to go about finding a job. So I decided to stay put and continue to live with my aunts and uncle in Geelong until I could sort myself out. I got a temporary job with the Shire of Corio. The office was in an old Victorian building in semi parkland in North Geelong – quite a bike ride to get to and from. The City Engineer was a kindly gentleman whose son graduated a year ahead of me. I also knew a couple of other engineers working there who were slightly older than me.

I worked as a surveyor. There was a lot of subdivision work being undertaken in North Geelong and my job was to set out the road works by delineating the kerb and channelling and setting levels for the footpaths and vehicle crossings and to ensure that it all drained properly. I remember it being hot work. I started in December and worked through January and into February. I soon got sick of it. The only memorable event that occurred there was when we all decided to go down to Melbourne one Saturday to the MCG to watch the cricket. Australia was playing the West Indies in what is still probably the most exciting series of Tests ever staged anywhere. We went on the second day when the record was broken for the highest attendance at a cricket match – 90,800.

It was later broken in the Ashes Boxing Day Test of 2013. It was a stand out day of cricket with great players such as Frank Worrell, Garfield Sobers, Wesley Hall, Lance Gibbs, Rohan Kanhai, Seymour Nurse and Cammie Smith playing for the West Indies and Richie Benaud, Allan Davidson, Bobby Simpson, Colin McDonald, Norm O'Neill, Wally Grout and Ken 'Slasher' McKay for Australia. The series was so close and played in such an adventurous and sportsmanlike spirit that even my dear old Auntie Dorcas became interested in it. When the West Indian team left Melbourne for their journey home, Wisden reported:

"Commerce in Melbourne almost stood still as the smiling cricketers from the West Indies, the vanquished not the victors, were given a send-off the like of which is normally reserved for Royalty and national heroes."

At any rate I decided to go down to Melbourne and knock on a few doors to find a job. I think I always had an appreciation of the aesthetics of bridges and so I thought I would try the Country Roads Board (CRB) first. I rang my Auntie Mem who lived in East Ivanhoe and asked her if I could stay a few days and of course she agreed. I didn't even know where the CRB's office was and she told me that it had just recently shifted into a 'lovely' new building in Kew. I could get there by bus and tram. Sweet woman she was, she suggested that if I wanted to, I could live with them. Once more I was to be enveloped in the bosom of my family.

So without a skerrick of evidence to identify me or my qualifications and experience I set off to see if I could become a bridge engineer with the CRB. Talk about a boy from the bush!

Dear Members continues over page

I was just wearing a jumper, cords and desert boots and the lone receptionist at the CRB Head Office told me that the employment office was round the back of the building on the Lower Ground Floor. When I enquired there I was asked what I wanted to do. I told them that I was interested in becoming a bridge engineer and the people behind the counter laughed and explained that the employment office was for blue-collar workers only. One of them made a phone call and it was arranged for me to meet Mr McKenzie in the Human Resources Department on the 5th Floor.

I took the lift up there and Mr McKenzie saw me immediately. I told him I had a Diploma of Civil Engineering and was interested in becoming a bridge engineer. He took me at my word and enquired whether I played football. I told him that I played for Colac in the Hampden League and he said that there was an annual match played between the engineers and the administration staff each year and it was due to be played in March and that I would be eligible to play. He was more or less telling me that I had the job. He had consulted with no one, I had produced no evidence of my identity, I was not told how much I would be paid or any other conditions but he did enquire about when I wanted to start. I requested three days later and he told me to report to Tom Russell, the Assistant Chief Bridge Engineer, at 8.45 am on the appointed day. The entire process took no more than 20 minutes but I was elated.

I rang Auntie Mem and told her the news and said that I would head off home to Colac to get some clothes. Mum and Dad were holidaying in Auntie Jean's caravan in Queenscliff and I knew that they were going back to Colac the following day so I caught the train to Geelong and then hitch hiked to Queenscliff and stayed the night with them. They were thrilled by my news and kept asking questions about the job but of course I didn't know a thing.

I met Tom and established a life-long friendship with him. He is now 92 but I see him every month at a lunch in Carlton. He rose to become the Chairman of the Board and the Chief Executive Officer of the Road Construction Authority (RCA). He is a legend of the CRB/RCA. He started work as an Engineering Assistant working on the North-South Road (now the Stuart Highway) between Alice Springs and Katherine during the war. He is a remarkable man and has been a great influence on my career. He knew everyone who worked for the CRB including the grader drivers and the road patrolmen and he knew all the pioneer road engineers who created the road network that we now take for granted. Without a doubt, he has been the most loyal servant to the CRB that I know. He was considerate and understood people's needs. I was touched when about four years later, after I left the CRB to take up a scholarship in England, Tom turned up on our doorstep in London unannounced to see how we were doing.'

David Jellie
Editor

Dates for your diary

October	Monday 8	12 noon	Occasional lunch, Shoppingtown Hotel
	Thursday 11	6.00 pm	Drinks and dinner at Waverley RSL
	Monday 29	TBA	Visit to West Gate Tunnel Project
November	Monday 26	12 noon	Occasional lunch, Shoppingtown Hotel
December	Monday 3	12 noon	Christmas luncheon
2019			
February	Monday 11	12 noon	Occasional Lunch, Shoppingtown Hotel
	Friday 22	TBA	Golf Day at Green Acres Golf Club

What's coming up

Occasional Lunch – Shoppingtown Hotel – Mondays 8 October and 26 November 2018

Bookings are not essential, but it would help with arrangements if you can let Kelvin York know on 9438 1028 if you can attend. We hope to see you there.

Visit to West Gate Tunnel Project – Monday 29 October 2018 at 2.00 pm.

We propose to meet in the foyer of the West Gate Tunnel Authority at 80 Collins Street at 1.50 pm. Please contact Ted Barton on 9802 3194 or edbarton@optusnetcom.au before 24th October if you propose to come – so that he can arrange security passes to enter the office.

The West Gate Tunnel Project will be built over five years and is scheduled to open in 2022. It is being constructed in three separate precincts as follows:

- West Gate Freeway Precinct: upgrading and widening the freeway from 8 to 12 lanes. New express lanes between the M80 and the West Gate Bridge will reduce weaving and merging that leads to traffic congestion.
- Tunnels precinct: new tunnels from the West Gate Freeway to the Maribyrnong River, taking motorists and trucks underground and off residential streets.
- Port to City precinct: a new bridge over the Maribyrnong River and an elevated road along Footscray Road will provide direct links to the Port of Melbourne, CityLink and an extended Wurundjeri Way.

A brief description of each is provided below to whet your appetite for this visit:

West Gate Freeway Precinct

Construction has commenced on the works shown in the diagram below:

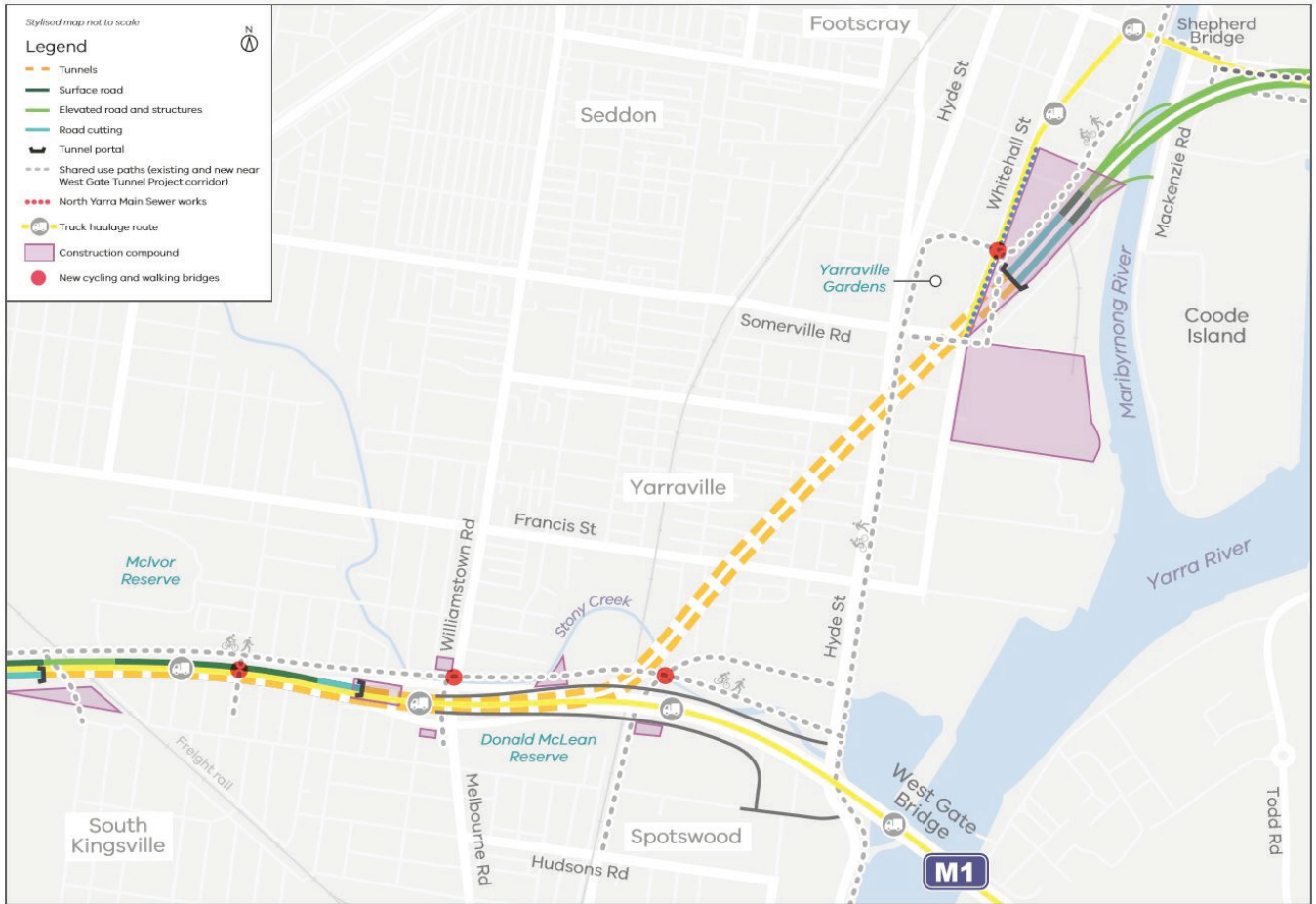


Features of the West Gate Freeway precinct include:

- Extra lanes on the freeway between the M80 Ring Road and Williamstown Road
- Entry and exit portals where the tunnels connect with the West Gate Freeway
- Ventilation structure at the tunnel exit to remove air from inside the outbound tunnel
- Interchange upgrades at the M80 Ring Road, Millers Road, Grieve Parade and Williamstown Road
- Ramps to Hyde Street to connect trucks directly with local industry
- Noise walls to reduce traffic noise for residents and open spaces
- Walking and cycling paths to complete missing links in the Federation and Kororoit Creek trails and better connect communities, including new overpasses over Williamstown Road and Stony Creek
- Pedestrian bridges replacing the existing overpasses
- Freeway Management System to support good traffic flow and safety
- New open spaces and planting thousands of trees and other plants in the freeway area.



Tunnels Precinct



Features include:

- Twin tunnels under Yarraville between the West Gate Freeway and the Maribyrnong River
- Entry and exit portals where the tunnels connect with surface roads
- Ventilation structures at each tunnel exit to remove air from inside the tunnels
- Walking and cycling paths on Hyde Street, Harris Street, Maribyrnong Street and a bridge over Whitehall Street
- New landscaped open space in Altona North and Footscray
- Freeway Management System to support good traffic flow and safety
- Tunnel safety features for smooth operation of the tunnel, including automatic detection for over-height trucks, fire systems and emergency access and exits.



Port to City Precinct



Features include:

- A bridge over the Maribyrnong River to connect the tunnels with an elevated road above Footscray Road
- Ramps to the port at MacKenzie Road and Appleton Dock Road for direct freeway access
- Elevated roadway connecting to CityLink, Dynon Road and Footscray Road, running above the centre of Footscray Road
- Walking and cycling paths for quicker and safer cycling to the city with a new veloway and bridges over Footscray Road and Moonee Ponds Creek
- Wurundjeri Way extension and widening – an extra lane in each direction and extending Wurundjeri Way north to Dynon Road to create a city bypass
- Freeway Management System to improve traffic flow and safety
- New open spaces and planting thousands of trees and other plants in the freeway area.





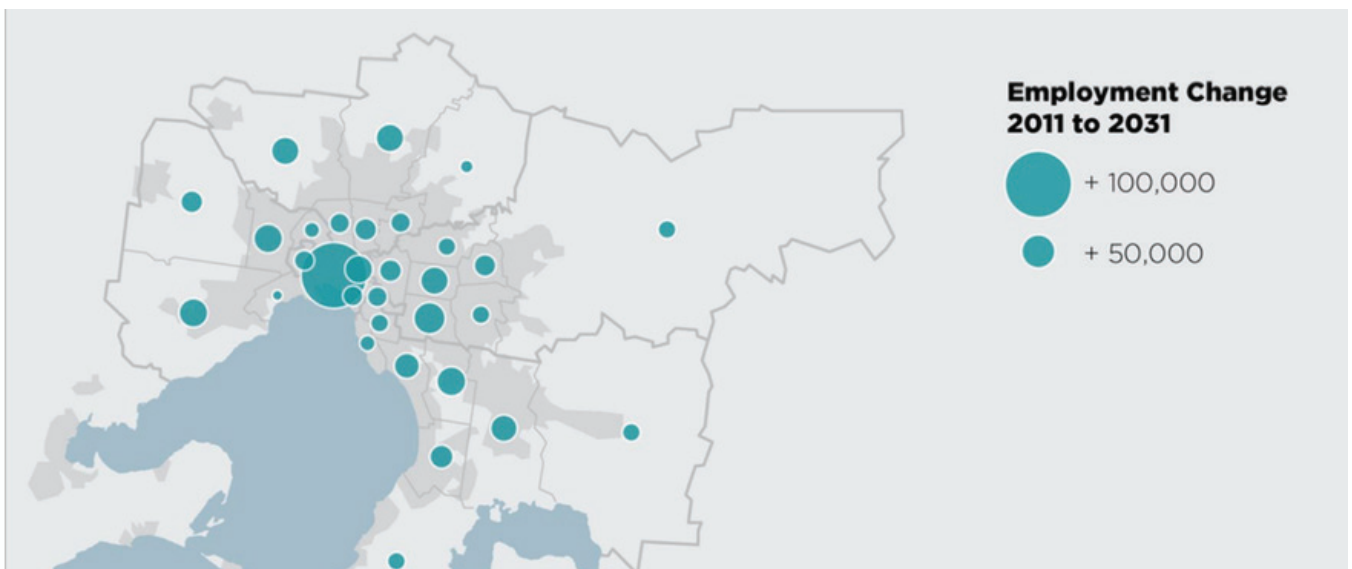
What's Been Happening

Visit to Rail Projects Victoria Monday 18th June 2018

We had a total attendance of 46 people to this session. Paul Thomas, Deputy Director, Tunnelling and Underground Stations gave us an overview of the project which I will attempt to sum up using some of his graphics.



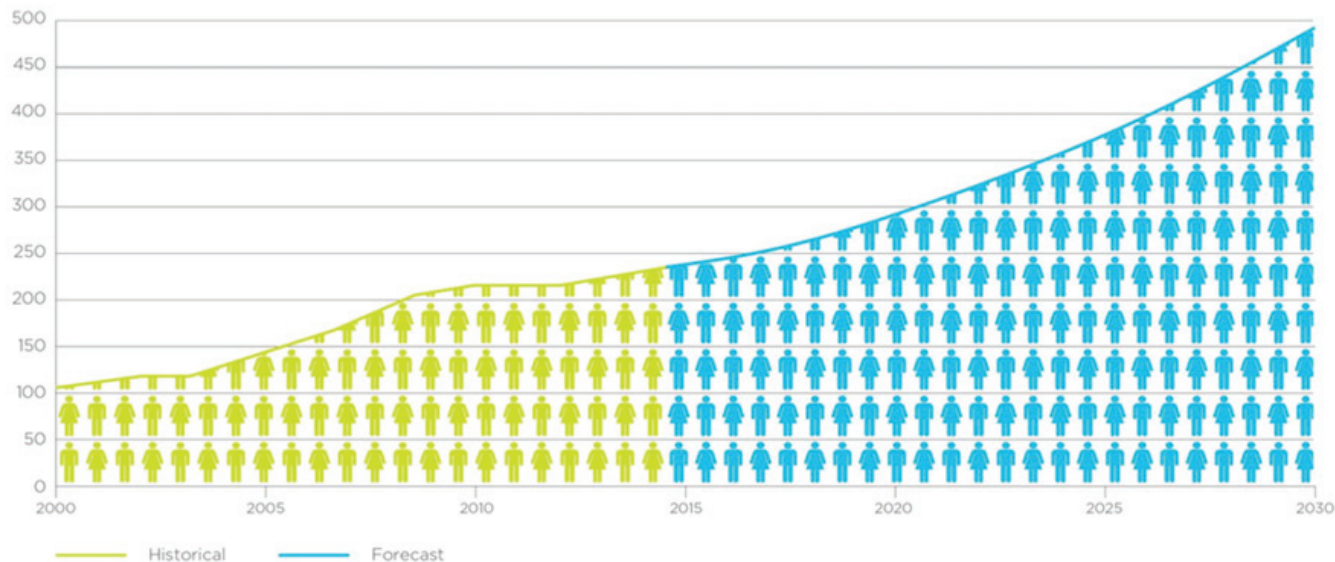
These figures indicate forecast population growth in Melbourne between 2011 and 2031. The growth is located in areas of greatest land availability and affordability and future public transport needs are designed to integrate with these patterns.



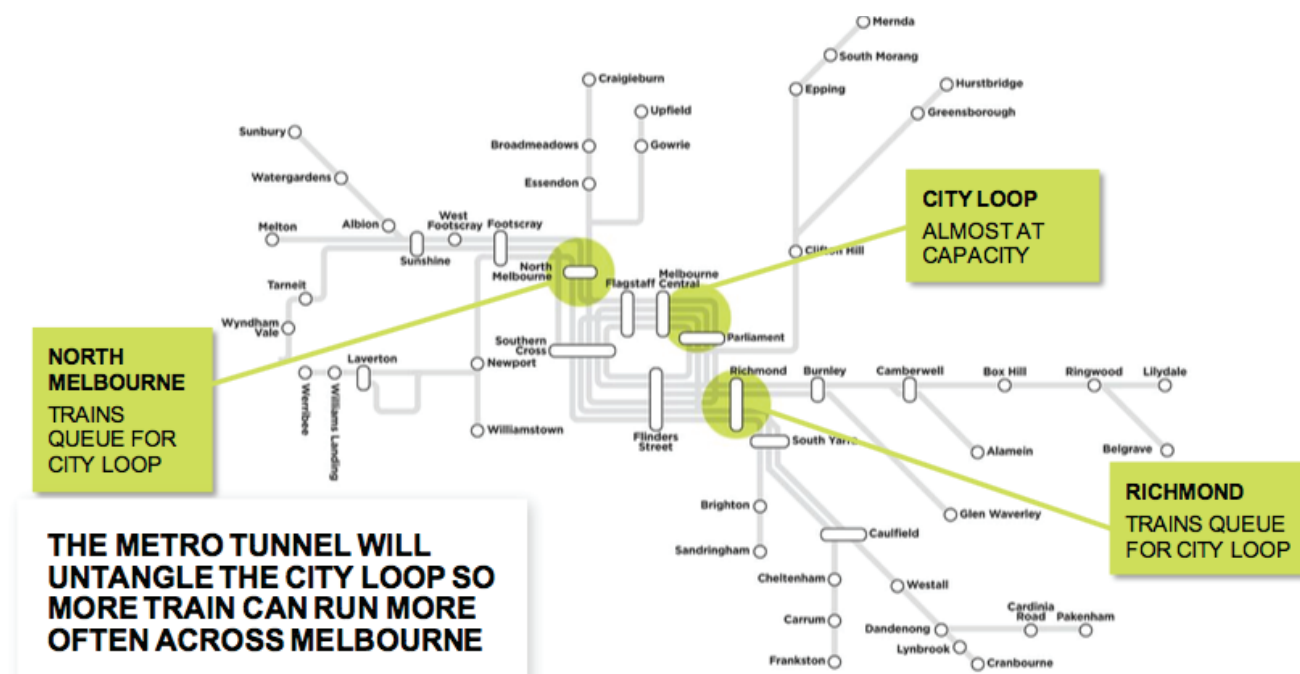
The expected growth in jobs in the same period shows the largest growth in the CBD and its environs with some larger hubs in Werribee, Cranbourne and Whittlesea.



Patronage millions



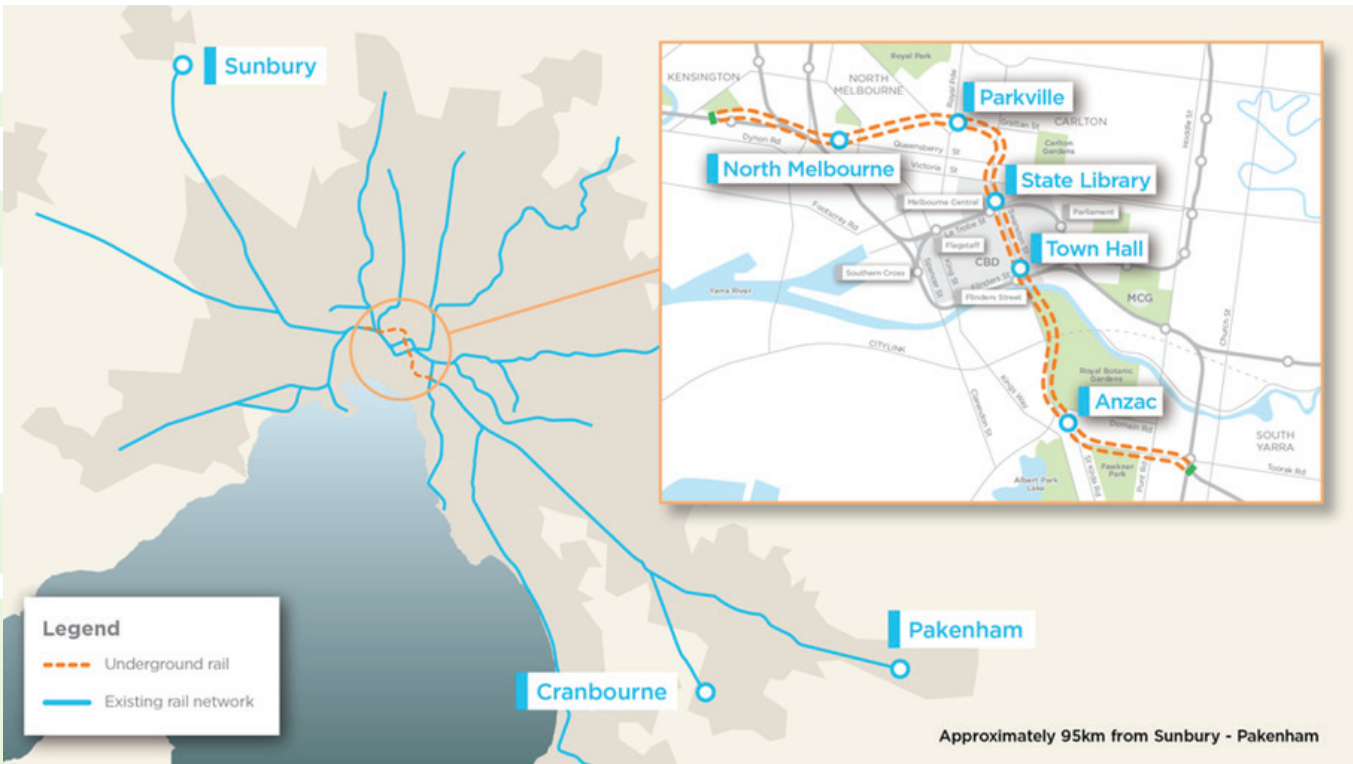
Metropolitan train patronage will rise accordingly.



The current network has three major constraints or 'pinch points' which the Metro Tunnel will eliminate to free up the whole rail network.



The proposed Metro Tunnel Project showing the location of the five stations between the Eastern and Western Portals.



All trains on the Sunbury/Cranbourne/Pakenham lines will be freed from the Loop but are connected at Town Hall and State Library Stations. Expected capacity increases of other lines are: Sunbury + 60%, Craigieburn +27%, Upfield +71%, Werribee +24%, Sandringham +48%, Frankston +15%, and Pakenham/Cranbourne + 45%. The other lines will have flow on benefits from the freeing up of the Loop.

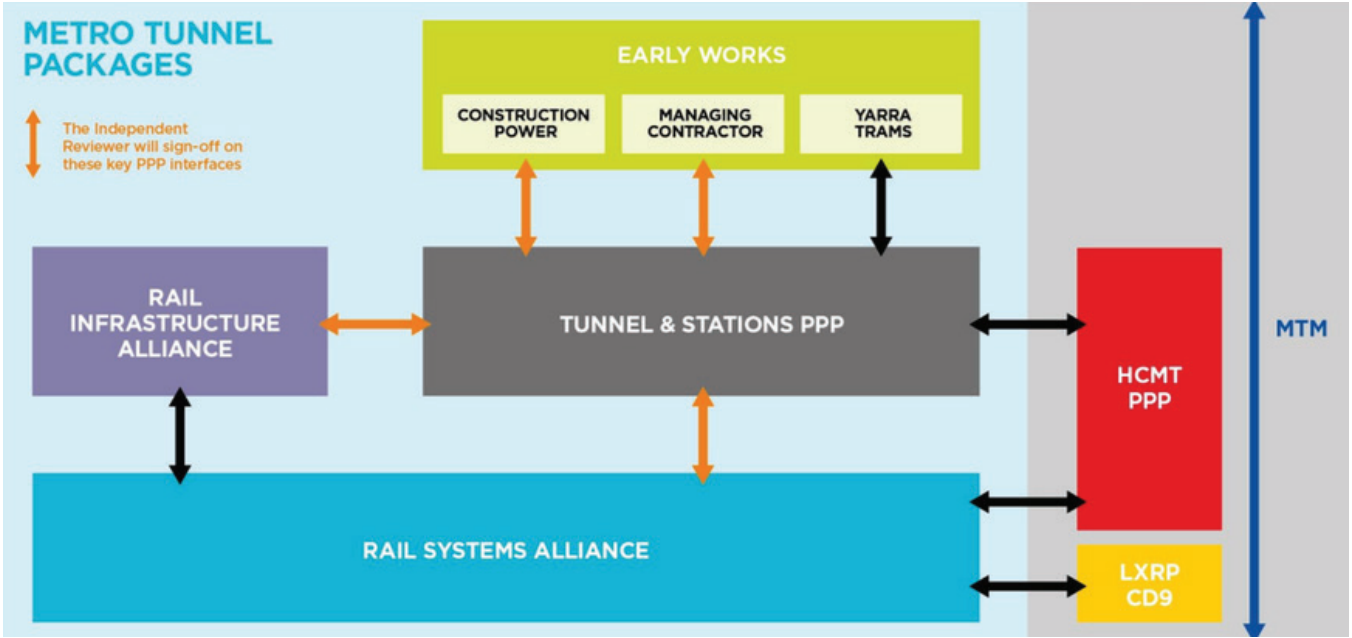


The tunnels will be built in three simultaneous stages – using two tunnel boring machines and a road header under Swanston Street in the CBD. The road header is being used in the central section because it is capable of more sensitive control such as going under the City Loop with a clearance of about one metre.



- EARLY WORKS**
 - Utility services relocation, demolition, CBD access shafts and other preparatory works (Managing Contractor)
 - Tram diversion works (Franchisee Works)
 - Construction power (Utility Service Provider)
- TUNNEL AND STATIONS (AVAILABILITY PPP)**
 - 9km twin tunnels and five underground stations including fit-out
 - Mechanical and electrical systems
 - Tunnel and stations maintenance
 - Rail systems installation within the tunnel
- RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE (ALLIANCE)**
 - Eastern and Western Portals
 - Integration of portal with existing rail networks (civil track overhead line equipment, signalling)
 - Eastern and Western Turnback
 - Wider network enhancements
- RAIL SYSTEMS (ALLIANCE)**
 - High capacity signalling
 - Conventional signalling upgrades and modifications
 - Communication systems
 - Platform screen doors
 - Train control and operational control systems
 - Systems integration and end-to-end commissioning

Of interest was the way the project has been split into packages to deliver the project. This is shown in the diagrams above.



Works are progressing in the construction of the access shafts. The Franklin Street acoustic shed has been completed and excavation is being conducted around the clock.



External view of the acoustic shed and construction works being carried out inside it.



Likewise, demolition and construction works are underway at other shaft location points along the tunnel such as at City Square, and opposite Flinders Street Station (behind Young and Jacksons).



Excavation in City Square

The concept designs of the stations have been developed. All of them have been designed in such a way to capture natural light from outside.



Concept for State Library Station



Concept for Town Hall Station





Concept for Anzac Station



Concept for Parkville Station





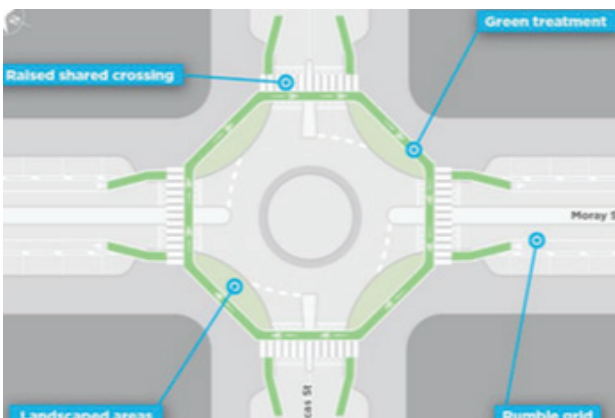
Concept for North Melbourne Station



Following Paul's briefing on the tunnels and underground stations, Lachlan Lee-Archer, Operations Manager, Surface Transport gave a presentation on the traffic network and what the authority was doing to improve safety for road users.

One of the initiatives was the introduction of protected roundabouts. In fact the first one was opened two days after the presentation as part of the Moray Street bike path. Video monitoring of key intersections and at tram stops was being undertaken as part of post implementation surveys and assessments at Fawkner Park Tram stop and Park Street/Wells Street intersection.

The roundabouts are designed to improve safety for pedestrians. A feature is the raised shared crossings and the rumble grids to alert drivers to slow down.



Typical layout of a protected roundabout.

Because of the large number of trucks entering the city centre to deliver goods and materials and to remove spoil, special requirements are being specified to protect pedestrians and cyclists including side under-run protection on project vehicles. All drivers will be required to undergo training to protect vulnerable road users. Vehicles will also be fitted with additional mirrors, improved visibility through windows in door panels and blind spot cameras.





Improved safety features for project vehicles.

Lachlan also briefed us on the changes in travel times along surface roads around the project and the strategies for road closures and alternative routes.

The questions asked by members following the presentations related to the following issues:

Construction:

- The methods used to keep tunnels on line
- The replacement of trees removed from Grattan St and St Kilda Rd
- The entities in the Alliances
- Financial risk and concession period
- Construction interface with City Link Tunnel
- Western and Eastern portals

Traffic:

- The effect of narrowing St Kilda Rd on trams

- The extent of rat-running around road closures and restrictions
- The safety of cyclists and alighting tram passengers resulting from passing vehicles failing to stop
- Implementation of St Kilda Road bicycle lanes

General:

- The extent of community input
- The impact on CBD businesses
- South Yarra station
- V-Line routes

This was an excellent presentation and David Jellie thanked the authority and the speakers for sharing their knowledge with us.

News from our members

John Wright's Odyssey (Continued)

The Regatta Hotel

The Regatta was (and still is) a grand old pub on Coronation Drive between Auchenflower and Toowong. I occasionally drank there after work on Fridays with the other designers. A year or so earlier I had discovered that the best beer in Brisbane was from the Bulimba brewery. Shortly before we arrived, Carlton and United took over Bulimba and their own brew masters set about 'improving' the local drop. Their new beer was awful, watery and tasteless and nobody wanted to drink it. CUB's hotels in Brisbane served Bulimba and Fourex beers, but their owners and staff were under strict instructions to push the new beer whenever possible. The Regatta was one of theirs. I once foolishly asked for a beer instead of a Fourex. They gave me Bulimba. After one sip I pushed the glass back and said, "Excuse me, I asked for a beer". The barman tipped the glass into the slops tray and poured me a Fourex without a word.

Shortly before our first child was born, a workmate won the Golden Casket lottery, so it was drinks for everybody at the Regatta after work. Arriving home legless around 10 pm, I managed to get undressed but was too far gone to don my pyjamas. After a short time in bed I got up to visit the loo but instead headed straight for the door to the passage which separated our flat from the other flats. Heavily pregnant, Sylvia struggled to get from the opposite side of the bed to stop me opening the door. I had just turned the handle when she slammed into me. It was a near thing, because at that very moment our landlady Mrs Brown was walking down the passage to her flat with a few of her friends after returning from a Temperance meeting. My sudden appearance, stark naked and drunk in front of them would have been fatal to our tenancy. We would occasionally find anti-alcohol pamphlets pushed under our bedroom door by Mrs Brown.

Our son's arrival

One night in January 1964, Sylvia woke me to say her waters had broken. After a short taxi ride to the Mater Mother's Hospital in Woolloongabba, we were dropped off at a special night entrance at the side of the building. There was a locked, blank steel door and a button, which we pushed. A large nun opened it from within, invited Sylvia in and took her suitcase. As I went to follow her, the nun stiff-armed me in the chest and then without a word, shut the door in my face. I was flabbergasted, but realising there was nothing more I could do, I walked back to our flat through the still, warm streets of South Brisbane.

I was sitting at my desk at 10.30 am the next morning when the hospital called to say that Sylvia had given birth to a fine, healthy son.

Correspondence school

At the beginning of 1964 I decided to continue my Associateship Diploma of Civil Engineering via a correspondence course with RMIT. I spent much time studying route evaluation, ports and harbours, railways, soil mechanics and pavement design. One of the persons marking my papers in Melbourne was Robin Underwood, whom I had met at the CRB in 1959. At the end of 1964 I sat for the exams in some very old buildings near the Victoria Bridge and was fortunate in being able to pass both subjects.

TV and Radio licences

We often saw members of the Queensland Police, dressed in bulky, poorly-fitting woollen khaki uniforms that seemed totally inappropriate for the climate and made them look more like 3rd world military personnel than police. We heard many stories about them – most of them cautionary tales. One fellow we knew told us he had spent the night in the slammer for drunkenness, and when he was released in the morning he discovered that his returned possessions were missing a TAB ticket he was waiting to cash. Of course, the police denied all knowledge of this ticket. Our friend went down to the nearby TAB and waited. Shortly after it opened, a constable he recognised came in and cashed a ticket, which was, in all probability his.

We had a knock on the door one evening and opened it to discover two police officers. "Stanley Joseph Wright?" asked one. No, I said, "I'm Sydney John." "That's the one we want", said the other, handing me a fine for not having a Radio and TV licence. Apparently, there were special radio detection cars that cruised around the neighbourhoods at night, recording which houses had TVs and then later checking to see if the owners had licences.

We paid the fine but did not purchase a licence. It would be another 8 years before we were bagged again, in Donvale Victoria. Even allowing for the fact there was no TV in Papua New Guinea, we were still miles ahead by not paying for TV licences. When Gough Whitlam was elected in 1971, he abolished radio and TV licences, calling them a tax on a fundamental human right to information. When Fraser was elected in 1975, he tried to reintroduce them, only to be told by the unions that he would have to collect the licence fees personally if he wanted the revenue. He gave up.

Leaving Auchenflower

Late in 1964 I successfully applied for a position in the firm's Port Moresby Office. I would be paid a special zone allowance of £10 per week; have subsidised rent and six weeks' annual leave with return air fares paid to my home town. After a 12-month period, the firm would pay our removal costs back to Australia. We were given smallpox inoculations and applied for our Entry Permits to Papua, which was then an Australian Territory. These permits were essentially a security check to ensure that we weren't criminals, union officials or left-wing political agitators, who were ruthlessly excluded by ASIO.

Port Moresby was then a township of about 25,000 Papuans and New Guineans and about 5,000 expatriates mainly working for the Commonwealth Government or for local government departments such as Education, Public Works, Health, Police and private businesses. The Territory was also preparing itself for independence in 1970. As a result, a major education and training program was underway to prepare locals for roles currently filled by expatriates.

I wrote to my friend Bruce in Melbourne, suggesting that he might wish to step into my position in Auchenflower, and maybe even take over our flat. Bruce agreed, applied for the job and got it.

Health scare

I was very conscious that I had no superannuation, because I had cashed in my previous policy after leaving the CRB. Colonial Mutual Life had a representative who visited the office, so I arranged with him for a policy that would take care of Sylvia and James if anything happened to me.

I was required to be examined by two Wickham Terrace medicos who would compare notes and determine my fitness to be insured. They separately questioned and examined me and retired to compare notes. Returning with grim faces, they were convinced I had leukaemia (my spleen, liver and the lymph glands in my armpit were all enlarged) and believed I was trying to arrange a big insurance payout for my family before I died from it. I was stunned. These guys were experts, and at 24 years of age, their opinion was terrifying. They dismissed my hopeful explanation that I'd recently been inoculated for smallpox, and what they were seeing was simply my body's reaction to that (which in fact was all it was).

The insurance salesman later phoned and said the doctors would give me a clean bill of health if I passed a blood test for leukaemia but said that I would have to pay for the test. I told him that if CML wanted my policy contributions they would have to pay for the tests or else I would go elsewhere for cover. He said I was being penny wise and pound foolish, and I told him, so was his company. He later rang back and said his company was prepared to pay. The tests showed that I was fine.

The firm arranged for our goods to be packed and forwarded to Port Moresby, and we travelled by train to Melbourne to spend Christmas with family and friends.

The flight

Returning to Brisbane on 5 January 1965, we met Bruce and Margaret Hamilton, who were moving into our old flat in Auchenflower. Later that evening Bruce drove us to Brisbane International airport, which was a very modest, Nissan-hut type of building at the far end of the domestic terminal.

It was well after midnight when we walked out into the humid air onto a tarmac still wet from a tropical downpour to our plane, a Trans Australia Airways DC6B, which was some distance away in the darkness. It was to be my first ever flight and it was all new and bewildering. I hadn't worn a seat-belt before and they were still unknown in normal cars. Buckling it up it seemed to be saying to me that flying was a high-risk activity.

After the door closed, the four piston engines were started one at a time with an enormous clattering din and it seemed that the entire plane was going to shake itself to pieces. This was alarming but I said nothing, hoping it was all perfectly normal as the plane waddled to the end of the runway. Worse was to come when the pilots opened up the throttles for take-off and the noise increased enormously. I could swear the wings were flapping as the brakes were released and the plane slowly accelerated down the runway. My anxiety increased because it seemed to take forever before we lifted off. Sylvia later told me she was terrified of flying, but on this trip, she held on to James and said nothing.

There was less noise once we were airborne, although I was to experience for the first time the stomach-churning sensation of the plane gently rising and falling through air pockets as we flew steadily northwards along the Queensland coast. It had been a long day. James was a perfect traveller, content and asleep in his mother's arms. It was a long night and Sylvia woke me while it was still dark to tell me that breakfast was being served. I remember thinking she hadn't been to sleep and I had a headache and felt completely exhausted. The omelette, bacon and sausages, washed down with orange juice and coffee, sat like lead in my stomach. Up ahead, in the half-light of dawn I could see a long, continuous bank of clouds and realised it was the coast of Papua.

Looking back, we were both naïve and completely trusting. I was 24 and Sylvia was 22. We hadn't thought to ask the firm about the standard of our accommodation and its facilities, or where it was, relative to the office. It hadn't crossed our minds as to how we might get about in Port Moresby or where we would go shopping - much less consider what medical facilities might be available for Sylvia, James and our unborn child. It was a big step into the unknown for us.

Arriving in Port Moresby

All too soon the plane had landed, and we were walking down the metal stairs onto the runway. The warmth and humidity hit us as a physical blow, like a hot, moist, heavy blanket being dropped onto us. We hadn't appreciated we'd be arriving in the middle of the wet season.

The airport buildings were mostly open sheds with no air conditioning. Emerging from the Immigration check area we met Bob, the firm's manager in Port Moresby. He was a big, friendly New Zealander with freckles and red hair. After collecting our luggage and James' pusher, which had been squashed in the aircraft hold, Bob drove us the 10 miles into town, and we caught our first glimpse of the stunning blue of the Coral Sea as we came over Three Mile Hill on our way down towards Koki, a native village on stilts over the water.

All along the road I could see hundreds of dark-skinned people walking in single file. Many of the native women were naked to the waist and carrying babies in string bags (called 'billum bags' slung over their shoulders).

The place looked very tropical with banana, palm and mango trees everywhere and tall Kunai grass that looked like sugar cane. While it looked incredibly green we were not to know that this was only a consequence of the wet season, and that in the dry season, much of the low vegetation died off and by mid-year the town actually looked more like Port Augusta - brown and dusty, than a tropical paradise.

Rounding Koki Point, a tight bend on the narrow coast road, we saw ahead of us the wide sweep of Ela Beach on Walter Bay, fringed with coconut palms and huge Jacaranda trees at the foot of a mountain named Tuaguba. The tide was out, and hundreds of natives were spread out on the exposed reefs and mud flats, collecting shellfish. At the horizon, we could just see the surf breaking on the outer reef. At the far end of Ela beach was the township of Port Moresby, sitting on a low saddle between two hills called Tuaguba and Paga, which formed the end of a short, narrow peninsula between Ela beach and Port Moresby Harbour.

As we drove down the main street I glimpsed a triangular shape jutting out of the water at the far end of the harbour. It was all that remained of the Motor Ship MacDuhi, which had sunk during World War 2. Carrying aircraft fuel and ammunition, it caught fire after being strafed by Zeros. The burning ship drifted around the harbour for several days before it eventually ran aground.

Just past the Police Station we turned left off the main street into Armit Street, which was on the steeply sloping Ela Beach side of Paga Hill. A long flight of concrete steps led down to the Company's office and the attached manager's flat

Bob introduced us to his wife Faye, who was preparing to go to work at Avis car rentals at the airport. Their flat was nicely appointed with, polished wooden floors, air conditioning and indoor plants. It was a welcome relief from the oppressive humidity, even at that hour of the morning.

Because of the steeply sloping ground the rear of the building was perhaps 15 feet above the ground, on long, braced poles. From my desk I would be able to look left across the palm trees to Ela Beach and Walter Bay. Above my desk was a suspicious hole in the ceiling, rumoured to come from a WW2 bullet. There was a story the whole office building came from Cooktown. Turning around I could see the ships in Port Moresby Harbour. For a while after I arrived, a Catalina flying boat took off from the harbour every morning to some destination along the Papuan coast. It would taxi around in circles making a lot of noise until it was warmed up enough to take off. Many Catalinas were destroyed by the Japanese in Port Moresby and you could still see their remains underwater in places.

After breakfast, the assistant manager Ted arrived, and while Sylvia had a short rest with James, he took me for a quick sight-seeing trip to the summit of Paga Hill which overlooked both Port Moresby Harbour and Walter Bay. Returning to the office, he drove us to our flat, which was one of three located in a single complex on a steep hillside at the eastern end of Ela Beach. There were two flats downstairs and a much larger flat upstairs, which was occupied by Ted, his wife and their three young children.

To be continued.

News from VicRoads

Vale

Peter Ravenscroft

A notice in a recent Age newspaper reported the death of a Peter Ravenscroft and I suspect it was the same Peter who worked for many years in the Bridge Design Division. Can anyone confirm this for me?

Trivia and didactic whimsies

You, Me and the DLP

This story was prompted by a number of memories that seemed to coincide. An old friend of mine, Brian Dillon, wrote it. I and everyone else call him Red because he used to have red hair. Red came from Sea Lake up in the Mallee. His father was the local pharmacist in town and Red was sent to school at St Patrick's in Ballarat where he played in the football team in which one George Pell was the ruckman.

As you know, I am writing a memoir and I sent one of the draft chapters to some of my friends to get their comments to check the accuracy of what I am writing. Red was one of those friends. The chapter included commentary about the dichotomy between Catholics and Protestants that prevailed at the time of my youth. You will see that Red is Catholic and I was Protestant but we forged our friendship on other characteristics. We have known each other for about 60 years.

Red wrote to me in response to what I had written but there was one other incident that prompted this tale. He saw the ABC journalist, Barrie Cassidy, on 'Home Delivery' on Channel 2 - who related an experience of being spat on while handing out DLP how-to-vote cards in his hometown, Chiltern, in his youth. My story and Cassidy's comments revived a story about an event in 1955 when Red was home in Sea Lake from boarding school during a long summer break. This is what he wrote:

'Our town had a healthy dose of sectarianism. Clubs and committees and the fabric of our society had a natural divide; the Proddies were in the ascendancy here and the Mick's there. We muddled along happily with the status quo but there were times when crises occurred such as when a 'mixed marriage' took place. And so it went until a new priest, Father Gerry, arrived in Sea Lake. He was eccentric to say the least. For example, he bought a new Dodge sedan and stripped every bit of nickel off it - the strips down the side, the wheel caps, the lot. The car looked as though it had been in the war. The reason he did this was that he had read in the Readers Digest that there was less likelihood of a car being struck by lightning if the nickel had been removed.

In fact many of his Sunday sermons were inspired by articles in the Readers Digest until he learnt that the founder of the Readers Digest was a divorced and re-married man - thereafter his flock were told to avoid reading it. But that car had the first roof rack I'd ever seen. Father Gerry made one out of four bits of 2" x 1.5" timber and somehow fixed it to the roof.

In 1954, the Marian Year, Bishop Fulton Sheen was in full flight on Sunday night radio. He thundered 'The family that prays together, stays together'. Sea Lake received a statue of Our Lady that was doing a circuit of Victoria and, I think, came to us from Fatima. Our Lady was lassoed around the neck by four guy ropes and plonked on top of the Dodge and Father Gerry set off from St Mary's church around the town, with the rest of us in cars forming a procession to the footy oval to say the rosary. Our Lady shared the roof with a very large trumpet-like speaker that was painted in silver frost. Indeed most of the stuff around the presbytery received a coat of silver frost. Unfortunately for cordial relations in our small enclosed society, Father beeped his horn or perhaps he began a 'Hail Mary' over his broadcast system as we went past St Andrew's just as Sunday Evensong was commencing and that really stirred things up.

As far as the animosity between 'them' and 'us' there was never a word said at our table about 'them' and yet with my lineage of mostly Irish names, I instinctively knew where I stood. Politically, we were apolitical - if you know what I mean. Politics was never discussed at home. All I vaguely knew was that Winton Turnbull of the Country Party was the Member for Mallee and that's all you had to know. However 1955 brought us 'The Split'. I remember the priest reading out the Bishop's Letter at Sunday Mass saying that if you voted for Labor you would be excommunicated. I remember thinking at the time that if they've got the Pope off-side then they are goners.

Voting was conducted up at the Memorial Hall and the how-to-vote cards were dispensed by the Country Party always, Labor mostly, and from time to time, the odd Independent. Everyone knew that Winton would be returned. In 1955 Catholic action got going and they preselected a DLP candidate. The local organizer came into Dad's pharmacy and said that he had to cover the booths from Manangatang to Woomelang and could Brian do the 3 to 5 pm shift for him up at the Hall. 'Certainly' said Dad and so on Election Day I went up to the hall to do a couple of hours of handing out the DLP cards on a very hot afternoon. What a revelation was in store for me.



Now while the town had its divisions there was also a togetherness that was probably stronger. We had all endured together the Wars, the Great Depression, droughts, dust storms, and mouse and grass hopper plagues. Our family were not blow-ins. We were original settlers. Mum and Dad were held in high esteem – all sorts of people came into the shop to seek Dad's advice on a range of things and they were contributors to the life in the town. Undeservedly, I enjoyed the halo effect. People sort of willed you to get on and if you went away to boarding school it was a plus of sorts, because it would show that we, us, Sea Lake, the Mallee could do equally as well as the others. For those of us who did go away we became representatives of the town and its aspirations – a little bit of the golden child. I was very comfortable in my skin in that community.

Up at the hall I took the how-to-vote cards from my man and got a frosty reception from the lady handing out the Country Party cards. I thought that was odd as we'd always got along well and then various farmers and their wives came trickling in to vote and they walked all over me. Greetings were not returned. This is odd, this is uncomfortable, I thought. Time dragged. It was 5.30 pm and my man had not returned. I saw a kid on a bike and asked him if he wanted to earn 2/- and gave him the cards while I hurried to the top pub to catch up with my mates – who unlike me had not taken the pledge - but that is where they'd be so I had to be there before 6.00 pm before it shut.

I was in the pub talking to my mates arranging what we'd do that night. Actually there was only one choice - the pictures. Suddenly the swinging doors to the bar flung open. It was O'Brien the baker – new to town and new to me - father of many and a very big bloke. He was ropeable. 'Where's Dillon?' he yelled. Seeing me he made straight for me with clenched fists. Thank goodness he demonstrated his intentions as he was grabbed and restrained. It was his child on the bike to whom I'd given the DLP cards and O'Brien was a red-hot Labor man. In fact his brother was Father Leo O'Brien and I think that there was a family bust up over the ALP/DLP paradox. Bit by bit he was talked down until he could see that I did not do it to make a political statement. Maybe he bought me a squash and maybe I bought him a beer to bury the hatchet but I think not. But I do remember leaving the pub thinking that I was lucky to be in one piece and wondering what is it about this thing called politics that brings about such change in people.

Incidentally Father Gerry, despite his eccentricity, attained the highest rank of a Chaplain in the Australian Army during WW2. He refused to stay behind the lines and took himself to the front with 'Confessions Anytime' painted on his tin helmet. He said the men needed him there. He attained the rank of Colonel.



Get out and enjoy nature

It is always good to hop in the car and get out to enjoy nature – isn't it?



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