



Sydney Tramways Handling of heavy traffic on special occasions

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A side-line to the ordinary day in and day out traffic handled by the New South Wales Tramways, which reaches a total of approximately 860,000 passengers per diem, is the special traffic to the various sports grounds and surfing beaches. In this connection Sydney is unique amongst Australian cities, for the reason that the most important sporting and racing arenas, as well as the more popular bathing resorts, are remote from railway lines, and the major transport of their patrons devolves on the tramways. This remark applies to the Royal Agricultural Society's Ground, which, during the Easter period when the Show is held, commands the largest attendance of any Showground in Australia; to the Sydney Cricket Ground, where international as well as interstate cricket and football matches are contested; and to Randwick Racecourse, which ranks second to Flemington in popularity and compares favourably with it, particularly during the Sydney Cup Meeting at Easter and the Spring Meeting in October, the latter being the curtain raiser for the Melbourne Cup.

Hundreds of thousands of people who visit Sydney's beaches at week-ends and on public holidays are dependent upon the tramway system for their transport. Among the bathing resorts referred to are Bondi, Coogee, Clovelly, Maroubra Bay, and, on the north side of the Harbour, Balmoral. In addition, a number of pony race courses, at which races are frequently held during the mid-week, claim the services of the tramways for the conveyance of their patrons. Amongst these may be mentioned Ascot, Rosebery, Kensington, and Victoria Park.

Sydney is fortunate in having the Royal Agricultural Ground and the Cricket Ground adjacent to each other, for the reason that when sports are held simultaneously at each, which is frequently the case, the one service and supervising organisation can be arranged to serve both.

Special tracks, suitably arranged for the expeditious handling of this class of traffic and for storing and marshalling the cars necessary for the home journey, have been laid down in the vicinity of the grounds mentioned. These sidings, which are capable of storing 200 cars, are clear of the main running lines and permit of cars being held for any period without interfering with the ordinary services. On many occasions this accommodation is inadequate for the storage of the whole of the

This remarkable paper was delivered to a gathering of Australian public transport managers on 6 February 1934. It is important to all those who are today grappling with Sydney's transport and planning problems because it shows that in the inter-war years the street railway system could rapidly and effectively move massive numbers of people to and from special events in a manner that can only be dreamed of today.

The tramways were the key to the remarkably efficient people-moving systems that then existed. They had a loading capacity midway between buses and heavy rail, but with a dense coverage of the then-existing metropolitan area and the ability to run at much greater frequency than heavy rail. When required, they could be operated almost nose-to-tail as a 'moving footway'.

In view of the current problems transporting the public to special events at the Cricket Ground and Fox Studios (formerly the Showground) there is a special irony in the ease with which 175,000 people could be simultaneously transported to and from these two venues during the inter-war years. Today it is considered impressive when buses deliver 8,000 people to a sporting event – equivalent to about 10 minutes of tramway operation.



Patrick J. Timmony at his desk in the Department of Road Transport and Tramways at about the time this paper was written. He died in 1956 at the age of 85, while playing bowls.

cars required for the return service. The difficulty is then got over by timing additional cars to reach the Cricket or Showground after a portion of those already there have been despatched.

The special services to these grounds are run from Circular Quay and Railway Square Loop and are returned to these points at the conclusion of the sports. The same remark applies to the special trams serving Randwick Racecourse. The service from Circular Quay caters for passengers from the Eastern Suburbs and the north side of the harbour, and that from Railway Square

Loop for passengers from the Western and Southern suburbs and the Central Railway Station.

As a record breaker the Royal Agricultural Show, which runs over a period of 9 days and 6 nights, holds pride of place. On Easter Monday a few years back 997 tram car loads were carried on the outward journey and 1,137 on the return, or a total in both directions of 2,134 car loads. Practically the whole of the cars in use were of the 80-seat type, so that the number of passengers carried was approximately 170,000. When it is considered that, in connection with the Sydney Cup Meeting held on the same day, 484 car loads were carried to Randwick and 544 car loads returned, or a total of 1,028 car loads representing approximately 82,000 passengers, and that, in addition, provision had to be simultaneously made for ordinary holiday traffic to the various seaside and picnic resorts, it will be realised that the tramways were handed a herculean task.

The record loading to the Sydney Cricket Ground, established in connection with an International Football Match between England and Australia, was 346 car loads on the outward journey and 357 on the return, or a total of 703 car loads, representing approximately 56,000 passengers. The fact that the 357 car loads on the return from the Cricket Ground were lifted in less than 25 minutes will give some idea of the effectiveness of the Sydney Tramways in expeditious loading and despatch. It may be remarked that passengers load at both sides of the cars at the one time and have the advantage of 16 entrances.

The loading and unloading facilities at Randwick Racecourse are on an elaborate scale and comprise 6 lengthy platforms, 2 only of which are available for discharging passengers on arrival at the racecourse, whereby they are landed at the entrance gates to the Paddock and the St. Leger, the whole 6 being in commission for the return. On the return journey 3 platforms are set apart for Railway Square Loop passengers and 3 for Circular Quay passengers.

After the finish of the races passengers reach their respective platforms by way of overhead bridges from The Paddock and from the St. Leger enclosures, and it is worthy of mention that the bridges referred to and the stairways leading to them have been specially designed to permit the exit of just that number of passengers that can be handled by the tramway service without causing congestion on the platforms.

Storage and marshalling sidings have been constructed in a portion of the racecourse reserve, and are capable of accommodating 280 cars.

The facilities mentioned permit of passengers being lifted from the platforms at the rate of 1,000 per minute, and the figures for the record day at Randwick are 664 car loads on the outward journey and 717 on the return, or a total of 1,381 car loads in both directions, representing approximately 110,480 passengers.

As in the case of the Show and Cricket Grounds, the sidings available at Randwick are insufficient to store the whole of the cars required for the return traffic on important occasions, and it is therefore necessary to have the requisite additional cars in a handy position so that they can move



into the race course as those already stored are despatched. The regulated flow of passengers to the platforms enables this to be done without difficulty. In passing it may be stated that although 717 car loads had to be provided for, it was not necessary to have that number of separate cars earmarked for the job. As a matter of fact, as the racecourse cars require to travel over sections of the route on which heavy holiday services are already operating, it would not be practicable to handle this number of separate cars between the racecourse and Railway Square Loop and the racecourse and Circular Quay. Four hundred and twenty (420) cars are sufficient for the purpose by returning as many as may be required to the racecourse for second trips, and under such circumstances there is practically an unbroken circle of cars between the racecourse and Railway Square Loop until sufficient are on their way back for a second trip to shift the whole of the racecourse passengers.

On Easter Saturday and Easter Monday, when the attendances at both the Showground the Racecourse are very large, it would not be possible to provide for the whole of the return traffic from both places simultaneously. By mutual arrangement with racecourse authorities, who finish their programme not later than about 4.20 pm, and with the Showground authorities who prolong theirs until after 5.00pm, and by a judicious arrangement of intermittently diverting to the Showground Racecourse cars that have completed their first trip to Railway Square and Circular Quay, very little difficulty is experienced in getting the Showground patrons to town in time.

Alternative routes are available both in connection with the show and Racecourse services, and permit the special trams on both outward and return trips being kept clear of the heavier routes over an appreciable portion of the journey, whereby they obtain an uninterrupted run. For instance, special cars to the from Circular Quay, instead of following the regular traffic route in Oxford Street, are diverted to Campbell Street. Similarly, special cars operating the Railway Square Loop-Racecourse service are diverted to Phillip and Redfern Streets, missing Anzac Parade junction which is a notorious congestion point.

Passengers disembarking from a fleet of trams at Randwick Racecourse in the late 1920s, when the tramway system could move 40,000 spectators to and from the races in around 40 minutes.



Passengers boarding a Circular Quay -bound tram at Driver Avenue outside the Showground sometime during the 1950s.

Whilst the tramway traffic to the various bathing resorts does not loom so large as that to the sports grounds mentioned, it is, nevertheless, of an important nature and calls for special consideration. Fortunately this class of traffic starts early and finishes late, and this fact affords an opportunity to give the racecourse special trams a run to the beaches before they take up their legitimate work, and allows them to be similarly used after the racecourse traffic is finished.

Coogee, before losing much of its popularity to Bondi, put up a record on one occasion of 300 car loads. Bondi Beach on 26.12.1931 accounted for 225 car loads, and Balmoral Beach on the last public holiday 207 car loads.

As a result of the depression the pony racecourses, in common with other sporting centres, have lost much of their glamour, but, possibly, only temporarily. Ascot pony races on one occasion attracted 180 car loads (out and back) and Kensington 136 car loads (out and back). Incidentally it might be mentioned that, as in the case of the more important sports grounds, it has been necessary to specially provide marshalling sidings at each of the pony racecourses in order to handle the return traffic.

In catering generally for the more important sports and race meetings, the first condition necessary is a reasonably accurate forecast of the probable attendance. Arrangements must necessarily be made some time in advance to enable the requisite staff to be secured and rostered, and as the conditions which influence attendances at these fixtures are many and varied, something other than precedent – which, by the way, does not always exist – is necessary. For instance, the prospect of Don Bradman batting would easily account for an additional 10,000 at the Cricket Ground, and a meeting between Hall Mark and Peter Pan would probably have the same effect at a Randwick race meeting. Having decided on the probable attendance, the arranging of the services is an easy matter. In the case of sports meetings it has been found that the service should start generally from $1\frac{1}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours before the commencement of the programme. On occasions, however, it has been necessary to start the services four (4) hours ahead.

In the case of race meetings at Randwick, 2 to $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours before the first race suitably meets requirements. During outgoing traffic the cars provided are able to run several trips; consequently a limited number, generally about 40% of the total required for the return traffic, are sufficient. After the finish of the outgoing loading these cars are laid up at the sports ground or the racecourse, as the case may be, for return traffic. It has, at times, been suggested by irresponsible persons that in the interests of economy the crews employed on these trams should be signed off and brought back in time for return traffic. The answer to this is “experientia docet”.

Lack of interest in connection with an International Football Match (New Zealand – v – Australia) resulted in from 10,000 to 15,000 people leaving the ground at half time. A change in the



weather conditions has more than once stopped an International Cricket Match in the early afternoon and sent practically the whole of the attendance homeward. From 90 to 100 car loads of people have left Randwick Racecourse after the principal race of the day, which took place in the middle of the programme. The resultant chaos can be visualised if the tram crews concerned had been at home having afternoon tea instead of being at their posts.

The whole of the City Tramway Depots combine in providing the necessary service, the demand made upon them being in proportion to the number of men and cars at their disposal.

Particulars as to the services required, as well as the general arrangements, special instructions, and disposition of the controlling officers are notified to all concerned by means of a weekly pamphlet known as the Weekly Notice.

The additional cars for return traffic are provided by calling on the services of men who have already worked a morning shift, and these are known as "call backs". As has been previously stated, after the return traffic from the racecourse or other sports grounds has finished, the special cars are commandeered for other traffic – business traffic on ordinary days and picnic and beach traffic on Saturdays and Holidays. Every tram used for these special services carries a lettered disc indicating the Depot to which it belongs. This enables the traffic officers on point duty to divert such cars to routes which will permit of their being used in their own districts, or, if not required, to be readily despatched to their home depots.

As the Traffic Awards must be respected, the controlling officers are enabled to readily distinguish special cars that may not be used without exceeding the 12-hour span by the fact that they carry red discs which indicate that their crews have signed on duty before 6.45 and must, therefore, be returned to their home depot not later than 6.45 pm.

Special cars, the crews of which have signed on later than the hour mentioned, carry black discs.

With 1,490 cars to call upon no difficulty is experienced on public holidays in securing sufficient rolling stock to meet any demand. There is a limit on such occasions, however, so far as men are concerned, for the reason that the holiday timetables practically require all cars to be manned for a double shift.

On business days the reverse is the case, for whilst sufficient men can be made available by cancelling days off, suspending holidays, utilising call backs. etc., all available cars are required for the ordinary business traffic. On such occasions a judicious pilfering of cars from a number of lines

Crowds departing from the Showground shortly after the First World War. This photo was taken just across Driver Avenue from the 1950s photo opposite. Note the queues of trams loading in the background.



A superb people-moving system at work: the tram platforms at Randwick Racecourse before the First World War. Passengers boarded trams at the rate of over 1000 per minute. Note the photographer with his assistant (perhaps he's even one of those new media technocrats, a newsreel cameraman!) standing on top of the signal box.

is necessary, and is generally followed by unkind criticism in the press. However, providing the sports meeting concerned finishes reasonably early, as is the case in connection with races and football matches, the special cars on their return to the city are immediately diverted to the routes affected by withdrawals, and in many cases the critics, although unaware of it, have been provided with as much or more accommodation than they receive under normal conditions.

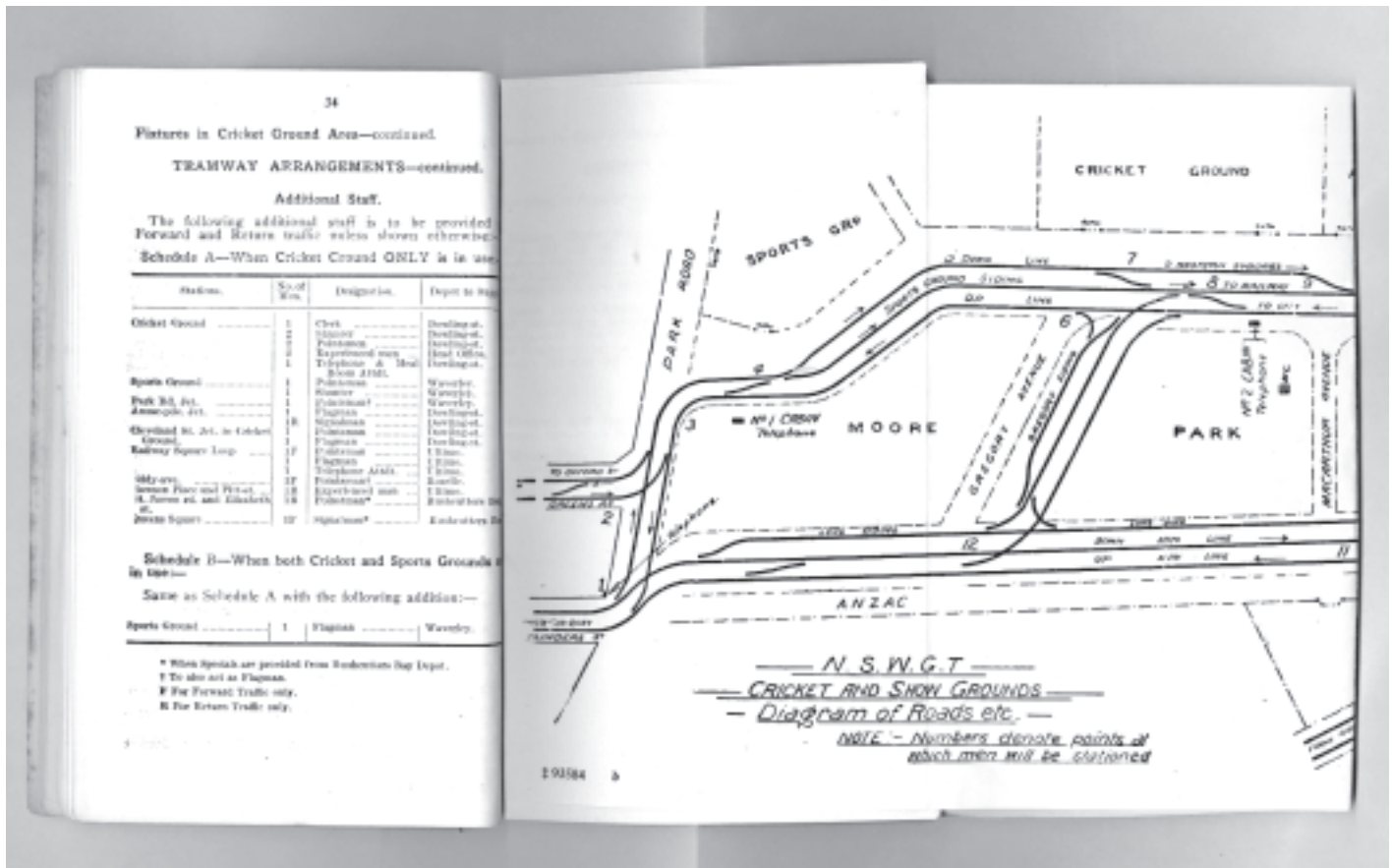
The collection of revenue in connection with the special services to the Show and Cricket Grounds is facilitated by the use of return tickets; single journey tickets being issued on the homeward trip only. A similar practice is followed in connection with the pony racecourses, and, in the case of Randwick Racecourse, the return tickets also include the entrance charge to the racecourse through the outer gate. This latter arrangement obviates the necessity of passengers obtaining change and paying at the gates leading from the Platform to the racecourse enclosure, and incidentally eliminates congestion on the platforms.

The majority of the records mentioned in this paper are those of pre-depression days, and although the growth in the number of private motor cars has considerably affected the number of tram passengers handled in connection with race meetings, sports, etc, there is some hope that with the return to prosperity the records of the past will be closely approached.

The condition in regard to the parking of motor cars in the vicinity of Randwick Racecourse is such that many people arriving late have to leave their cars half a mile from the racecourse entrance. As this distance grows it is more than likely they will again return to the tramways.

Some years ago the City Council decided to convert a large portion of Moore Park adjacent to the Cricket and Show Grounds into a motor parking area. As this park is assigned to the public for recreation purposes, motor car driving is presumably a form of recreation. The Council's action has been a profitable one for it, but it has had the effect of reducing the traffic carried by the special tram services to the Cricket and Show Grounds from 50% of the total attendances to less than 33%.

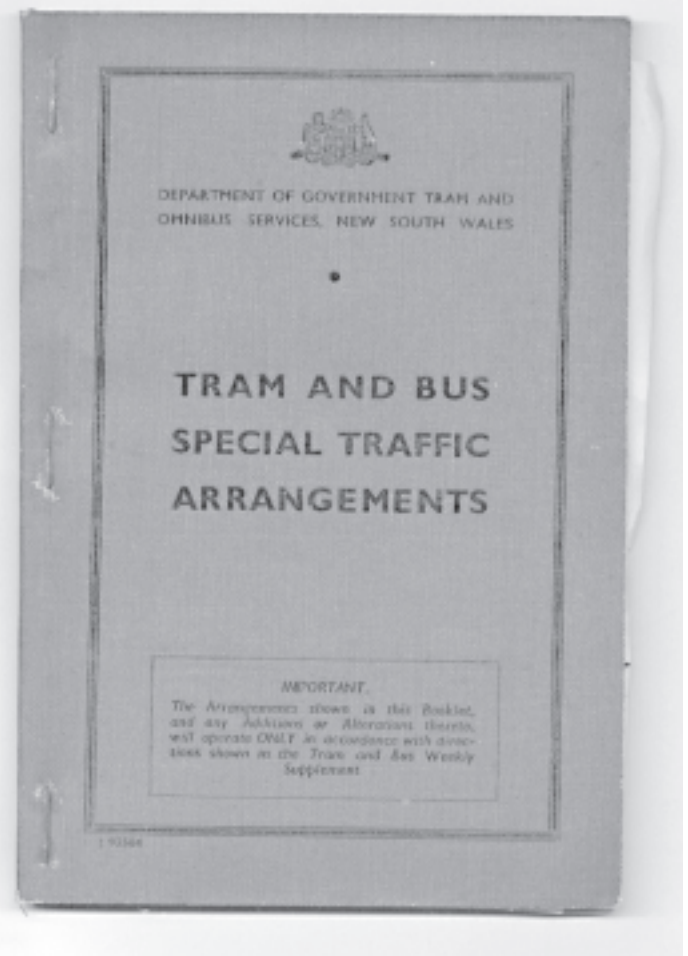
6th February 1934.



Moving huge crowds of Sydneysiders to special events like the races, the cricket and the Easter Show, and to popular beaches, was an art and a science in days gone by. Pocket manuals like this – based on several decades' experience with moving huge numbers of people – provided practical guidance for the tramways' traffic controllers.



More fascinating views of historic Sydney and its tramway system can be seen at Nick Possum's Old Sydney Town: www.brushtail.com.au/old.sydney.html





Eco-Transit Sydney Inc. is a not-for-profit organisation fighting for more and better public transport and against prolific private motor vehicle use, urban sprawl, air pollution and greenhouse gas generation.

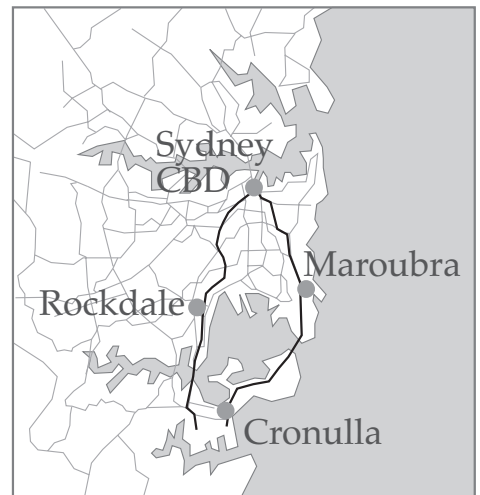
Eco-Transit produces information on transport issues pertinent to Sydney and initiates campaigns for the construction of new public transport infrastructure projects and improvements to existing mass transit systems.

In addition to *Letters of Transit*, Eco-Transit produces *Hell on Wheels*—an occasional newspaper providing information and analysis of current transport projects and *The Good Oil* a news bulletin covering events within the global oil industry and its implications for our economy. Highlights of both publications are available on our web site.

The Bay Light Express Campaign

As this first paper in our *Letters of Transit* series shows, moving large numbers of people to and from special events sites like the Showground and Randwick Racecourse was managed very effectively in days gone by. This is in stark contrast to our current situation where access is difficult, involving long delays and traffic jams. The trams are no longer there. The tracks were ripped up in the 1960s and replaced by lower capacity bus services. Urban motorway projects like the Eastern Distributor were built to improve car access to the Showground, Sydney Cricket Ground and Fox Studio sites, but the reality is different. The system is now more vulnerable to mishap, congestion and confusion than ever before. We need your help to change this!

Eco-Transit Sydney would like to see a return to the more efficient forms of mass transit service. The Bay Light Express is a proposal for the re-introduction of a modern light rail service to Sydney's south-east and southern sectors. Many of the sites discussed by Patrick Timmony could be serviced by the Bay Light Express, but for this to become a reality, your help is needed. Please take the time to visit our website, find out more about our campaigns and write a letter to the appropriate politician or become a member of Eco-Transit and receive regular updates on what's happening in Sydney's transport sector and what you can do to change things for the better.



■ www.ecotransit.org.au

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