



The Secretary  
Legislate Council,  
Economy and Infrastructure Committee,  
Parliament House, Spring Street,  
East Melbourne, VIC, 3002

## **RE: Inquiry into Expanding Melbourne's Free Tram Zone**

Travellers Aid is a not-for-profit organisation that empowers people with travel related challenges to connect, engage and participate with their community. Every year we provide over 200,000 instances of travel assistance to our users through personal care, buggy services, our companion service, disability services and emergency relief program. Travellers Aid is the only provider of these services in Victoria. 90% of our service users say that without Travellers Aid they would struggle to connect to the places they want to go.

The following submission will address four, of the five parts of the inquiry into Melbourne's Public Transport system.

- (1) *the expansion of the free tram system to include —*
- (a) Wellington Parade to Powlett Street, East Melbourne;
  - (b) Swanston Street to Elgin Street, Carlton;
  - (c) Royal Parade to College Crescent, Carlton;
  - (d) Flemington Road to Abbotsford Street, North Melbourne;
  - (e) St Kilda Road to Commercial Road, Prahran;

Travellers Aid Australia is of the belief that Melbourne's current Free Tram Zone (FTZ) is problematic, and therefore an expansion of the zone is likely only to exacerbate these issues.

The current FTZ makes it difficult for people with mobility challenges to alight trams in the CBD, as the convenience of a free trip generates more congestion on public transport. Any expansion on this is likely to make it even more difficult for people with mobility issues to use public transport.

This will be especially noticeable if the boundaries are extended past the Parkville hospital precinct. We believe that parking will become even harder to locate around the precinct as people outside the zone will drive to the edge to get a free tram trip. This will put even more strain on the people that rely on a car to get to essential hospital appointments. We suggest that further assessment is needed around the impact of expanding the FTZ on parking within the hospital precinct.

Travellers Aid Australia

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Looking at the current zone, it is hard to see who it benefits. It has been suggested that tourists would be at an advantage by being able to avoid the use of the infamous Myki ticketing system. However, there are only three of the 12 top Melbourne tourist attractions that are within the FTZ. This would suggest that most tourists would already have a valid ticket when travelling around Melbourne. Additionally, most general commuters would start their journey outside the FTZ so would also have a valid ticket.

Lastly, the FTZ may create an element of confusion for tourists around the boundaries of the FTZ, as well as which mode of transport is free. This will ultimately result in uncertain tourists being issued infringement notices at the edge of the zones, reflecting badly on the city of Melbourne.

*(2) providing free fares for all full-time students; & (3) removing fares for all Seniors Card holders;*

Travellers Aid does not support the idea that full time students and senior card holders should receive free fares, as both cohorts already receive heavily subsidized myki cards. We are of the belief that free travel should be income-based or means tested. This will prevent the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people being unnecessarily caught up in the legal system due to infringement notices as well as allow them to remain engaged by utilising public transport.

*(5) the effects and benefits of dynamic public transport pricing.*

We believe that implementing a dynamic pricing system may add more confusion to an already complicated ticketing system, and travel benefits such as off-peak may encourage higher car use. Travellers Aid suggests that further investigation should be completed before implementing a dynamic public transport pricing.

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Kind regards,

Greta McMahon

[Redacted contact information]

On behalf of,

**Travellers Aid Australia**

Travellers Aid Australia

[Redacted contact information]

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