



AUSTRALIAN RAILWAY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MELBOURNE BRANCH

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ARHS Melbourne Luncheon Outing Group, Footscray Tram Routes & Melton LXA Work removing Four Level Crossings Tuesday 3rd March 2026

Visit Footscray Tram Routes by bus and a bit of walking, lunch at Railway Hotel Yarraville, then train back to Footscray and train to Melton, to look at Level Crossing Removal Works occurring around Melton, then train back to Southern Cross.

Bus 220

- 9:25am Flinders Lane & Queens St Melbourne.
- 10:01am Barkly & Russell Street West Footscray.
- 10:22am Barkly & Argyle Streets.
- 10:33am Nicholson & Buckley St Footscray walk to site of Footscray Tramway Trust Depot and view Footscray Pool & Tram Mural.

Bus 223

- 10:52am Albert & Buckley St Seddon.
- 11:10am Eleanor St & Ballarat Rd Maidstone.
- 11:22am Rosamond Rd & Ballarat Rd.
- 11:35am Toilet Stop if needed at Footscray Station, then train to Yarraville Station, then walk approx. to Railway Hotel Yarraville
- 11:45pm Bayview Rd & Somerville Rd Yarraville.
- 12:00pm Walk along Somerville Rd to Birmingham St & down to Yarraville Station to get to Railway Hotel Yarraville for Lunch.
- 1:55pm Leave Railway Hotel walk to Yarraville Station.
- 2:11pm Catch train to Footscray Station.
- 2:15pm Arrive Footscray Station.
- 2:24pm Change to VLine Train to Melton.
- 2:55pm Arrive Melton look at LXA Works to remove 4 level crossings.
Tour ends here.
- 3:30pm Depart Melton Station for Southern Cross Station
- 4:11pm Arrive Southern Cross Station.
- 3:53pm Option to travel to Bacchus Marsh and see all the LXA work from LHS of carriage.
Depart Melton Station.
- 4:01pm Arrive Bacchus Marsh Station.
- 4:40pm Depart Bacchus Marsh Station for Southern Cross Station.
- 5:23pm Arrive Southern Cross Station.

Footscray: genesis of a local tramway

By Russell Jones. First published 2003 Melbourne Tram Museum Website

The establishment of a tramway system is not associated with reason and logic, but like most human decision making processes is fraught with emotionalism, competing interests and political manoeuvring. Often long-term benefit is sacrificed for short-term gain, resulting in eventual failure as a result. The genesis of the Footscray Tramways Trust in the second decade of the twentieth century is a case in point, when decisions were made through a lengthy and tortuous process that determined the nature and type of tramway that the suburb of Footscray would receive.

The first suggestion that there should be a tramway in Footscray was raised in 1885, concurrent with the development of the Melbourne cable tram system.

Charles Lovett, a noted local artist, suggested that there should be a cable tram service serving Footscray. However, the high capital investment required, together with a general lack of interest meant that this proposal was stillborn.

However, the growth of electric tramways in Melbourne through the various tramways trusts sparked interest amongst the public in Footscray and surrounding areas from about 1910. Local councils regretfully showed an almost total lack of concern regarding this matter. This stymied progress for some time.

In 1914, various tramway leagues were established as public pressure groups to promote a variety of tramway schemes in the western suburbs. These groups could be categorised into those wanting a link to the Essendon tramways versus those who were pushing for a purely local developmental system, heading west and south from Footscray railway station. The tramway leagues lobbied Footscray council, which proved reluctant to move due to doubts about the financial viability of any tramway, together with the lack of unity expressed between the various leagues.

The council was more in favour of a private omnibus service, due to the lack of any need to commit capital expenditure on its part. The leagues were virulently against this direction, due to the recent failure of such a service after only a week's operation. The feeling was that without investment in tramway infrastructure, there was no guarantee of any long-term operation of public transport in the area. The tramway leagues realised the reluctance of the council to commit to a tramway, so pulled together to form the Footscray & District Tramways League. However, divisions within the league still existed between the pro-link and local route groups.

This amount of public pressure was having an effect on thought within the council, so it commissioned a number of studies and surveys during 1915. Much was made of the difficulties caused by the war, in order to delay the making of any decision towards the construction of a tramway. The North Melbourne Electric Tramway & Lighting Company (NMETL) also made representations to the council for a link between its tramway and the council's proposed system across the Maribyrnong River via the Showgrounds, in order to increase its traffic receipts. There was also considerable support from the Royal Agricultural Society for the NMETL proposal. However, the council was not in favour due to the requirement for a new bridge and the amount of vacant land that would be traversed.

The council felt that a link to the Essendon lines would benefit Essendon more than it would Footscray, so it announced that the link would not proceed as part of the Footscray system. However, this was not the last of the matter. The council did instruct its chief engineer to ensure that the bridge over the Maribyrnong River to be used by the proposed link (later the Farnsworth aerial bridge) would be capable of supporting a tramway.

In December 1915, the State Government passed the bill authorising the establishment of the Footscray Tramways Trust. Included in the bill were provisions for the Footscray Council to disband the trust if it did not wish to proceed with construction of a tramway. It was announced that this bill would remain in force until the Government decided to absorb it into a central tramways authority.

There was considerable tension within the council at this time regarding the tramways, particularly between those representing the north ward versus the west and south wards. In February 1916 Essendon Council approached the council on behalf of the NMETL regarding the link route, but the numbers were against them. Indeed, tensions were such that on the council vote to form the Footscray Tramway Trust, a tie was only broken by the casting vote of the Mayor.

The next several months were consumed arranging finance for construction, which was made more difficult by the conduct of the war and the resultant shortage of capital. However, all activities of the FTT, including the proposed routes, were shrouded from the public by a veil of secrecy. By January 1917 the lack of progress and transparency in reporting led to a significant loss of confidence in both the council and the FTT.

There was significant public sentiment for a link with the Essendon lines. A strong argument was made based on the successful [PMTT](#) in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, which was aggressively expanding both its network and its alliances with municipalities beyond its original bounds. The PMTT was financially successful, whereas the NMETL was undergoing significant financial woes due to its restricted traffic base. It was thought that the FTT should ensure that it did not suffer similar financial problems by restricting its growth potential, and rescind its decision not to build the Essendon link.

However, it was felt that opposing the direction of the FTT to build only local lines would result in no tramway being built at all, so a general level of frustration reigned, and no effective concerted action was taken against the council and the FTT to force the building of the link.

Meanwhile, the war was making acquisition of materials difficult. Skyrocketing insurance rates made importation of tramway rails impossible, and there was no capability within Australia to roll [grooved tramway rail](#). BHP Limited expressed interest in producing rail for the tramway, as its newly built Newcastle steel mill was ready for business. It was decided to use standard railway pattern rail modified with a bolt-on check. BHP obtained the contract for the rail, with a local engineering company, G.F. Sewell, not only getting the contract for attaching the bolt-on check but also the contract for building the Brill 21E truck frames for the ten new tramcars (seven one-man and three combination cars).

Other contracts were let as follows:

- wheels and axles – Thompsons of Castlemaine
- special work (points and crossings) – Hadfields of Great Britain

- dog spikes – Victorian Rolling Mills
- tramway construction [1] – Messrs Lock & Raynor Contractors
- tramway construction [2] – Messrs Fisher & Moran Contractors
- tramway construction [3] – Albion Contracting Company.

However, even the use of non-tramway rail subjected the FTT to attack from the media, as well as continued attacks for its insistence on building only local lines, not to mention that erection of overhead poles would require removal of many trees.

On 3 March 1918 a rather prophetic statement was made in council that the FTT would never run trams in Footscray, as the Government was in the process of forming a central tramways trust for Melbourne. This was looked upon as a godsend, as the general sentiment was that such a body would construct the link to the rest of Melbourne, letting the council and the FTT off the hook.

But this was the moment that determined the future of the Footscray tramways, and the failure of nerve would affect the long-term development of the suburb.

On 30 July 1918, rails for construction of the Footscray tramway system began arriving at the docks, which set off a flurry of activity by the council. Realising that the trust did not yet have legal authority to construct the tramway, application was made to the Governor-in-Council for the approval of five lines, for which orders were granted almost immediately.

1. From Footscray railway station via Irving, Hopkins and Barkly Streets to Ashley Street Tottenham
2. From Footscray railway station via Irving, Hopkins, Droop Streets & Ballarat Road to Rosamond Road
3. From Footscray railway station via Irving, Nicholson, Buckley, Victoria, Charles, Gamon Streets and Somerville Road to Williamstown Road
4. From Nicholson & Irving Streets via Nicholson Street, across Footscray Park and Maribyrnong River Bridge via Farnsworth Avenue, Fisher Parade and Langs Road to link with the NMETL Saltwater River route at Epsom Road
5. From Hopkins & Nicholson Streets via Nicholson Street to Francis Street.

The FTT was undergoing extreme financial pressure by this stage, with no inwards cashflow and no tramway delivered. So when the HTT was in financial difficulties due to the need to reconstruct its brand-new tramline (as a result of shoddy contractor's work), the FTT saw a chance to save some money. The HTT had taken delivery of seven California combination car bodies from Duncan & Fraser of Adelaide, but had no money to complete them. The FTT therefore bought these bodies (later M&MTB M class 183-189) from the HTT, and arranged to store them at Hawthorn Depot until it was in a position to take delivery.

Also, routes 4 and 5 above were never commenced, and route 1 was constructed to Russell Street only, about two-thirds of its intended length, due to the same financial pressures. But this was not the only challenge facing the FTT. The war did not cause problems just with raw materials – electrical equipment was also in short supply. As a result there was a lack of generating capacity available at Newport Powerhouse for new enterprises, so even if construction had been rapid, operations could not have commenced under the FTT.

A final attempt was made to derail the local focus of the FTT, when the pro-link forces finally gained a majority on the council. Legal proceedings against Messrs Lock & Raynor were taken out by the council at the end of 1918, for opening up the roadway surface in Victoria, Charles and Gamon Streets without authority from the council, with the objective of terminating the contract without penalty to the council, as well as recovering capital from the contractor. However, when the contractor pointed out that they would be penalised £10 per week for delivery of the works beyond the contracted date (under their contract with an agency of the council), the matter was effectively thrown out of court.

The FTT was dissolved by order of the Governor-in-Council on 2 February 1920, being taken over by the M&MTB. It was not until 6 September 1921 that the long awaited Footscray tramways were opened, running services with the seven M class tramcars it purchased from the HTT – still wearing their original HTT numbers and livery. Two years later, these trams were replaced by former PMTT A class trams – at thirteen years old, they were some of the oldest and slowest in the M&MTB fleet.

This was to be the ongoing pattern for investment in the Footscray area by the M&MTB for the rest of its life, the M&MTB being dominated by management inherited from the PMTT with a strong focus on the eastern suburbs. The hopes of Footscray council for a central authority to take the management burden from them whilst still ensuring development of the area were to remain unfounded.

So what was the result of this exercise? The residents of Footscray had a local tram service of limited utility for just over forty years, for all of which except the final eight years was unconnected to the rest of the Melbourne system. A direct route to the Melbourne system was never built – instead a wandering route via Maribyrnong was gradually patched together between 1941 and 1954.

What remains of the Footscray lines is route 82, a cross-suburban route between Ascot Vale and Footscray railway station, which is not of any particularly great utility, especially as the heavy manufacturing and munitions industries that it served and that once drove the economy of the Footscray area have withered.

The key to the closure of the local Footscray routes in February 1962 was the failure by the FTT to build the direct route to connect to the Essendon lines. This limited the prospect of major investment in the Footscray tramways by the M&MTB as a result of the restricted opportunities for traffic growth, particularly when considered against its competing need to invest in the conversion of the cable tramways to electric traction.

As a result, the Footscray local tramways were like the regional tramways of Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo, doomed to fail against the challenge of the motor omnibus and private motor vehicle.

History Overview

The Footscray Tramway Trust (FTT) was a municipal body constituted on 30 December 1918 to develop an electric tramway network in the western Melbourne suburb of Footscray. It was the last of the municipal tramway trusts formed before the takeover by the Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board (MMTB).

Establishment and Dissolution

- **Formation:** The Trust was created following the 1915 authorization by the Victorian State Government to establish a tramway network, despite internal council tensions.
- **Construction:** The FTT was responsible for laying tracks, but was undercapitalized and managed during a turbulent period.
- **Takeover:** The Trust was dissolved on 2 February 1920, before completing the lines, with the MMTB taking over the assets and construction.

The Footscray Network

- **Opening:** The lines officially opened on 6 September 1921, using ex-Prahran & Malvern Tramways Trust (P&MTT) cars.
- **Operations:** The system operated in isolation from the main Melbourne network for many years.
- **Routes:** The network originally consisted of lines running in three directions from Footscray Railway Station.
- **Closure:** Most branch lines closed on 10 March 1962.

Legacy and Remaining Infrastructure

- **Route 82:** The only surviving line from the original network is the current Route 82, which runs from Footscray Station to Moonee Ponds Junction via Raleigh Road.
- **Depot:** The original tram depot was taken over by the MMTB and used for buses until the late 1980s.
- **Trams:** The system briefly used unique, brightly painted trams, and later used modified S-class trams for one-man operation.

Timeline From Peter Carwardine 23/02/2026

Footscray Tramway trust established December 1915.

Footscray Tramways Trust was dissolved on 2 February 1920 before the lines were completed

Opening of Footscray Trams by the MMTB was on the sixth of September 1921.

A class Trams were used to run the service when it opened, 7 A class trams from Hawthorn depot were transferred by truck to Footscray for use on the service, they were ex Prahran & Malvern Tramways Trust (P&MTT) tramcars.

A fourth route was planned with points and rail supplied by the MMTB to Hyde Street.

A fifth route was authorised on the 2nd October 2016.

The Footscray tramline now Route 82 met up with the rest of the MMTB tramline at Maribynong on 2nd May 1955.

MMTB tram W 800 was transferred to Footscray by truck on 16 December 1953 and stayed there till 5 May 1954, again transferred back by truck presumably.

Electric Power for the Tramways.

The Footscray Tramway trust needed a transformer to bring the power down to the voltage needed for the Trams, which they could not afford.

Power was obtained from the Newport power station run by the railways, the tramways obtained power via Borthwick's meat works which was adjacent to the Footscray railway station, power poles ran along the railway embankment to feed the tramway.

The Footscray Trams except for what is now Route 82 closed on the 3rd of March 1962 to be replaced by buses.

Melton Station & Other Stations Works

CAROLINE SPRINGS

- Platform 1 to be extended by 59m on the down end of the existing structure and 8m on the Up end of the existing structure.
- Platform 2 to be extended by 59m on the down end of the existing structure.

TRACK ALTERATIONS

DEER PARK

- Platforms 1 & 2 to be extended by 27m on the down end of the existing structure.

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Weekly Operational Notice No. 02/2026

Information from WON 2026-03

Melton Station Works

We're removing 4 dangerous and congested level crossings at Coburns Road, Exford Road and Ferris Road in Melton, and at Hopkins Road in Truganina, and building a new modern and accessible Melton Station.

About 73,000 vehicles travel through these crossings each day, with the boom gates down for up to 28 minutes of the morning peak.

Removing these level crossings and building a new Melton Station will make **journeys safer** and **travel times more reliable**.

Planned timeline

Construction continues, with all 4 boom gates to be gone and the new Melton Station, with extended platforms ready for the new 9-car VLocity trains, and future-proofed for electrification, will open this year. Does that mean 2026?

Info from <<https://bigbuild.vic.gov.au/projects/level-crossing-removal-project/projects/melton>>

The Level Crossing Removal Project has marked a major milestone, with the installation of its 1000th U-trough – an engineering innovation that has become key to many removals of dangerous and congested level crossings across the state.

Melton marks 1000th U-trough milestone

The 1000th U-trough was recently installed west of Coburns Road as part of the Melton level crossing removal project. To mark the milestone, crews created a stencilled memento in recognition of the 1000s of workers who have helped deliver and install these mammoth concrete segments on projects across Melbourne.

U-troughs are precast concrete structures that form the superstructure for elevated rail bridges, allowing trains to run above roads, freeing up space for new uses below the rail line. In an Australian first, the U-troughs have been designed specifically for the Level Crossing Removal Project and are now widely used across Victoria's Big Build.

Since their introduction on the Mernda Rail Extension in 2018, U-troughs have become a defining feature of Victoria's level crossing removals.

Their use in level crossing removal projects in Brunswick and Coburg, Preston, Pakenham, Parkdale and Carrum has helped to create more than 20 MCGs of open space for community facilities, playgrounds, and cycling and walking paths, and 1000s of new trees and hundreds of thousands of new plants, shrubs and grasses.

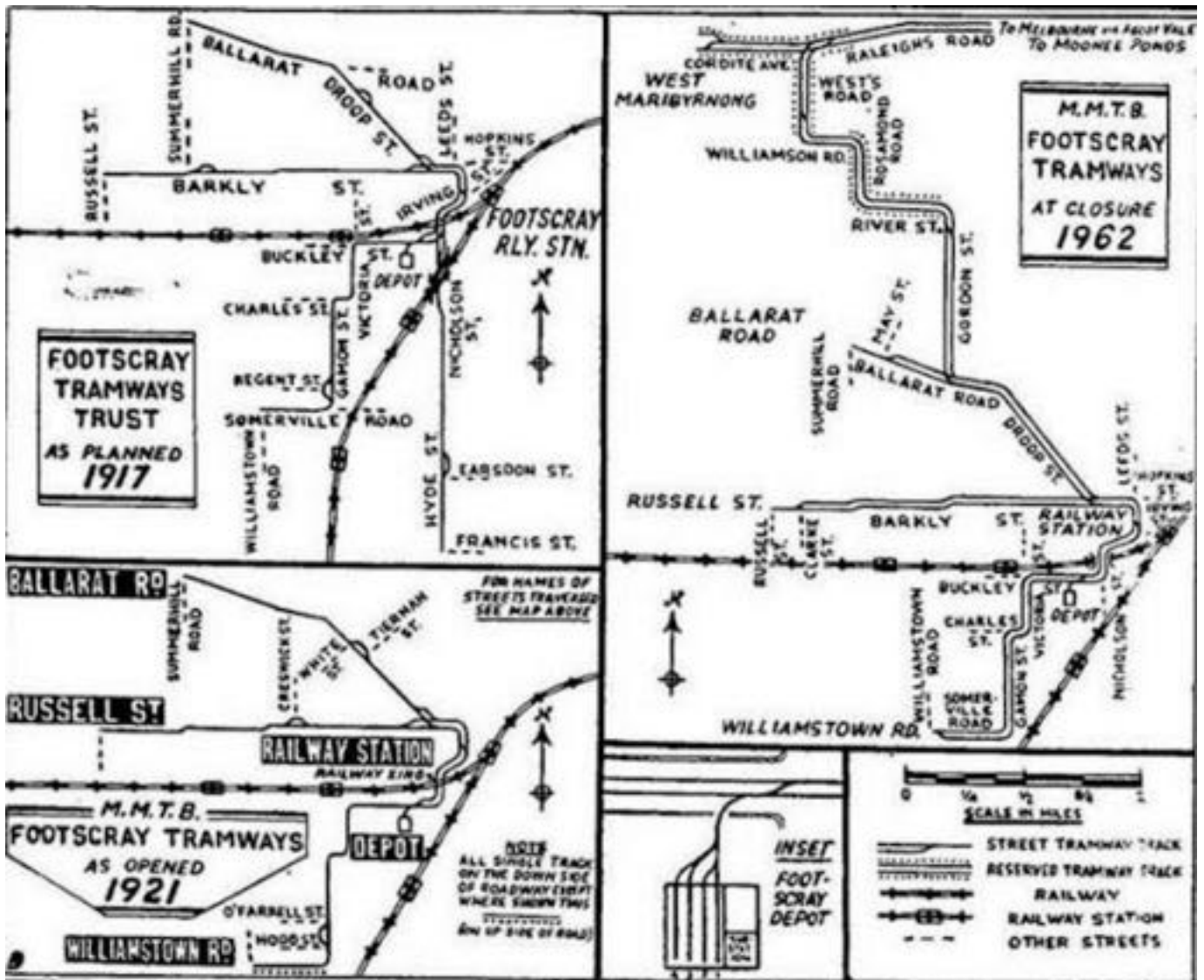
Deputy Program Director Ian Ransley played a key role in the decision to use U-troughs and was on the ground for the installation of the first one at Mernda.

Ransley said the design solution delivered fantastic engineering and community benefits, making the rail network safer and quieter, and transforming the way people live, work and travel.

The U-troughs, made up of 2 massive L-shaped concrete beams, are installed on top of crosshead piers and then 'stitched' together to form a U-trough. All the U-troughs have been manufactured in regional Victoria, supporting local jobs for more than eight years.

Senior Project Engineer Ben Bartlett, who was on site for the installation of the 1000th U-trough at Melton, said it was amazing to see them used in so many places to remove level crossings.

"It's a really impressive legacy that I have been able to contribute to. It's certainly something I will be taking kids back to in the future to show them what a wonderful thing I have worked on," he said.



Footscray Tram System (State Library of Victoria)



Opening of the three Footscray tramlines by the M&MTB, 6 September 1921 Melbourne Tram Museum



Barkly St, Commercial Rd beside Primary School 217 FB 20210905



Footscray Tram 462 at Terminus? . FB 20210905



Footscray Tram 7 Track Cleaner at Buckley St James Rush 19620128 FB 20210905



Footscray Tram 45 Belgravia Hotel Buckley St east bound turning into Nicholson St FB 20210905



Footscray Tram 53 crossing Maribynong River Tram Only bridge one track being rebuilt Road Bridge in Background FB 20210905



Footscray Tram 181 Barkly St West Footscray Tram Terminus at Russell St FB 20210905



Footscray Tram 182 Russell St FB 20210905



Footscray Tram 462 Buckley St FB 20210905



Footscray Tram 466 Turning from Gamon St East into Charles St FB 20210905



Footscray Tram 463 Droop St, stopped at Nicholson St FB 20210905



Footscray Tram 463 Droop St, stopped at Nicholson St. FB 20210905



Footscray Tram 700 Turning out of Leeds St into Hopkins St Hard Left Holden dealer that became Clark Rubber in the 1970s



Footscray Tram 460 Turning from Nicholson into Buckley St, Footscray Technical School on the right and the Belgravia hotel on the left. FB 20210905



Footscray Tramways Trust Depot with buses Buckley St opposite the Footscray pool. c1963 FB 20210905



Tram at Footscray Tramways Depot 217 FB 20210905



Staff Footscray Tram Depot FB 20210905



Barkly St at the Russell St Tram Terminus in West Footscray I reckon probably 1950s- 60s Pa Rambo's post FB 20241008



Barkly Street, Footscray, 1950s Tony Beyer's FB 20190326



Geelong Rd & Barkly St Footscray Late 1950s Tony Beyer's FB 20240327



T class # No 180 - now resident at our museum - is arriving at the old Williamstown Rd terminus, before heading back to Russell St via Footscray station. Image from our collection Melbourne Tram Museum 202210906 FB



Footscray Tram 655 Trams on Buckley St that in years later become the bus depot



Tram at Footscray Tramways Depot 467 FB 20210905



Footscray Tram 469 Ballarat Rd Rosamond Rd Looks like ticket inspector getting a serve FB 20210905



Footscray Tram on Maribynong River tram only bridge FB 20210905



Footscray Tram 670 on Tram only bridge over Maribynong River FB



Turning from Hopkins into Leed St Holden car dealer (Preston Motors), became Clark Rubber in the 1970s FB 20210905



Footscray Tram 591 FB 20210905



Footscray Tram Station, Victoria on 10th March 1962..

Footscray Trams at Station 19620310 FB 20210905



Elevated rail 1 GWa Pic 20251222



Elevated rail 2 GWa Pic 20251222



Elevated rail 3 GWa Pic 20251222



Elevated rail 4 GWa Pic 20251222



Elevated rail 5 GWa Pic 20251222



Lift shafts at Melton Bigbuild website 202511



Melton 1000th U-trough Milestone Bigbuild.vic.gov.au 2025 | I



The second steel bridge being lifted into place at Coburns Road, made of steel because of long span diagonally across road, concrete would be too heavy presumably. Bigbuild website 2025 | I

Photos by Geoff Wallace, information from bigbuild.vic.gov.au & Wikipedia, Melbourne Tram Museum, Footscray: genesis of a local tramway by Russell Jones. First published 2003, Text from Peter Carwardine 202260223. Facebook Pics Allan James 5th September 2021 and various FB people as referenced under image.

Notes compiled by Geoff Wallace

E&OE