



Victorian Women Vote 1908–2008

Melbourne Trams 1885-1940

Melbourne's first cable tram commenced operation on 11 November 1885. Electric trams ran from 1889 to 1896 and were reintroduced by the Victorian Railways in 1906.

By 1891, Melbourne had built one of the world's largest cable-tramway networks, consisting of 65 kilometres of track, powered by 12 coal-fired engine houses.

On cable trams, professional grip handlers used a grip mechanism to latch the tram onto a continuously moving underground cable which pulled the tram to its destination.

When poor weather struck, men sat in the open air tram carriages and took the brunt of the bad conditions while women sat in the protected enclosed carriages.

At the time, women were considered to be too "delicate" and lacking in the physical strength and agility required to work as a grip handler or a conductor on the tram network.

The last cable tram ceased operation in 1940 and electric trams continued on.

Women as tram drivers and conductors 1941-2008

Severe labour shortages during the Second World War affected the tram network and, as a result, women began to be employed as conductresses.

Employment applications from wives of Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board employees and wives of other servicemen were given preference.

These conductresses were the first female workers in Australia to receive a wage equivalent to male employees.

Women in other professions were usually paid only half the rate of men for the same work.

Australian Tramways and Motor Omnibus Employees' Association (ATMOEA) fought to achieve this wage for women. ATMOEA's motive was not to assist women but to ensure that male conductors would not be replaced by women in the long term.

Women were not permitted to become tram drivers until 1975, when Joyce Barry famously stated "I don't need a penis to drive a bloody tram!" in an ATMOEA meeting to discuss the issue.

Joyce Barry went on to become Melbourne's first female tram driver in 1975.

References and for more information go to:

http://www.100yearstrams.com.au/images/downloads/fact_sheet_anzac_day_april06.pdf

http://www.yarratrams.com.au/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-159//37_read-116/

<http://museumvictoria.com.au/marvellous/powered/trams.asp>

The Tramway Museum Society of Victoria Inc

http://www.100yearstrams.com.au/tram_history/history1.html



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www.women.vic.gov.au/womenvote

