

Thursday 2 October 2003

## **OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE MARKS FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF SMARTBUS**

SmartBus had good reason to celebrate its first birthday recently, having achieved patronage growth of 25 per cent in its first year of operation, Transport Minister, Peter Batchelor, said today.

Mr Batchelor said since the introduction of SmartBus services along Blackburn Road (route 703) and Springvale Road (route 888/889) in August 2002, almost a quarter of a million additional commuters have enjoyed the improved reliability and ease of use offered by the cross-town bus service.

“We are delighted to see the impact SmartBus has had in its first year of operation,” he said.

“SmartBus has demonstrated how Melbourne’s bus services can be tailored to meet the needs of commuters in the twenty-first century.

“The increase in patronage shows that SmartBus has made a real difference by providing a quality alternative to car travel and attracting new users.”

Successes in SmartBus’ first year of operation include:

- Increased overall patronage (19.4 per cent on route 703 and 30.4 per cent on route 888/889);
- Growth in full-fare-paying passenger patronage (22.2 per cent on route 703 and 35.3 per cent on route 888/889);
- Increased patronage at peak periods (12.5 per cent on route 703 and 13.5 per cent on route 888/889);
- Increased patronage on Saturdays (45 per cent on route 703 and 125 per cent on route 888/889); and
- Increase patronage on weekday evenings (51 per cent on route 703 and 67 per cent on route 888/889).

Mr Batchelor attributed much of the success of SmartBus services to an increase in bus reliability and frequency.

“SmartBus drew on worldwide thinking and technology to provide commuters with even better bus service reliability and frequency than previously experienced in Melbourne,” he said.

“Real-time signs, global satellite technology, additional bus services and better synchronisation with train schedules have ensured that SmartBus has fast become the preferred mode of transport for thousands of commuters travelling in Melbourne’s south east.

“Passenger comfort, safety and accessibility at bus stops has also improved with better lighting, footpaths with colour contrasting tiles and the introduction of standard kerb heights allowing easy ramp access to the low-floor buses that service SmartBus routes.”

Mr Batchelor said the growth in patronage and positive passenger feedback has encouraged the Government to invest further in SmartBus.

“Commuters travelling between Box Hill and Mordialloc will soon enjoy the benefits SmartBus brings when the \$5.6 million SmartBus service along Warrigal Road is launched this year,” he said.

“Additional SmartBus routes will be examined over the coming years.”

A SmartBus bulletin has been released outlining the performance of SmartBus in its first year of operation. To obtain a copy or for further information on SmartBus visit [www.linkingvictoria.vic.gov.au](http://www.linkingvictoria.vic.gov.au) or telephone 9655 8963. Information about bus service times is available from [www.victrip.com.au](http://www.victrip.com.au) or by telephoning 131 638.