

A history of Sydney's Transport ticketing – part 3 - Private bus tickets 1932-1966

Introduction

The State Transport (Co-ordination) Act 1931 imposed a 'co-ordination' fee of a penny per section per passenger on bus services deemed competitive to railways and trams. This resulted in a reduction of over 400 buses and the dismissal of around 4000 employees. The impact was exceptionally severe in the inner Sydney area.

In late May 1932 the Feeder Bus Operators Association was formed which continued the sale of tickets to operators.

The story of how a largely unregulated industry of small operators turned into the large corporate stakeholders of today's Sydney bus regions is told in John Birchmeier's book *The Private Bus Industry in New South Wales – A sign of the times*. On the way is interwoven the story of increasing mechanisation, from the first Solomatic tickets of the 1950s to cash register machines and today's computerised system. Private buses were the last to be converted to use of the Opal Card and were still issuing their own paper tickets in the My Zone era.

The basic ticket types used in NSW were:

- 'Flimsies' – various colours of low quality paper, mostly black ink
- Bell punch
- Card – used for weeklies and special tickets
- Solomatic
- TIM
- Cash Register

Flimsies

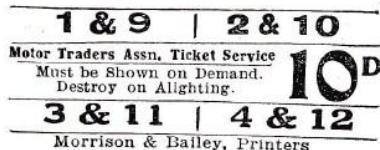
Preprinted paper flimsy tickets were in use throughout this period. They printed on sheets of low quality with serial numbers, then cut to size, and stapled in bundles of 200 or 250 with a cardboard backing sheet. Some had a printed line separating the ticket from the stub whilst others had a serration. Neither was very effective and many badly torn tickets were issued.

Flimsy tickets were intended for single use only and were true ephemera with an expected lifetime of the trip. Passengers were supposed to dispose of them as they left the bus but obviously many did not. This could lead to fraud where conductors collected used tickets and resold them.

There were two basic layouts - panoramic and portrait.

Trimmed tickets were sized 72mm by 27mm or 70mm by 25mm, the latter introduced during WW2 to save paper. Most were printed on white paper, but some operators specified different colours to enable quick identification of ticket values.

Most had six-digit serial numbers indicating the millions that must have been printed every year.



Ticket samples copied from MTA Journal.



Feeder Bus Operator's ticket

shops.

The 1931 the State Transport (Co-ordination) Act caused a massive reduction in private bus services and a significant reduction in membership of the MTA. The Feeder Bus Operators Association was formed in May 1932 with 75 members and continued the practice of selling bulk tickets to its members. They too used Morrison & Bailey as printers.

The example could be punched for up to tenth section but not the direction of travel.

This service was continued by the more specialised NSW Omnibus Proprietors Association (OPA). The OPA's tickets were usually titled 'NSW Omnibus Prop Ass'. The OPA sold tickets to their members through their co-operative store until machines largely replaced them after the 1980s. OPA tickets usually had spaces for punching eight IN and eight OUT section numbers along the top and bottom.

¹ MTA Journal 15 Oct 1924 p24

The one common feature of all flimsy tickets was the ticket value clearly printed in a significantly larger font size. Some tickets had section numbers in boxes along each long side indicating the inward or outward section to which the ticket was valid. The driver, or conductor, would use a punch to indicate the relevant number.

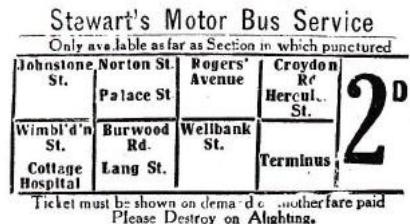
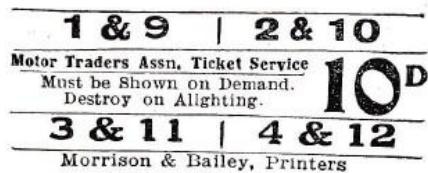
Most tickets carried a condition to the effect 'Ticket entitles passenger to travel into section indicated by punch. Ticket must be shown on demand or another fare paid'. For fare only tickets the wording might be 'entitles passenger to travel to section indicated by price'. The latter was more prone to abuse as it gave no indication of where the passenger boarded.

In 1925 the Motor Traders Association promoted a bus ticket service offering its financial members. They claimed to have sold 30 million tickets in a few months. Stock tickets were for values 1d, 1½d, 2d, 3d through to 1s and sold at 6½d for a 1000 and were available in nine colours. The operators name could be added at no extra cost provided 200,000 tickets were ordered for each denomination required. Similarly special designs could be supplied. This was considerably cheaper than commercial printer's rates of 1s1d per 1000¹. The MTA used Morrison & Bailey as printers.

The first two MTA example tickets were punched in the box the passenger boarded the bus and indicated the section the ticket was valid to. For example, a 10d fare paid in the second section would be valid to the tenth section. The third example was specific to one of Stewart's routes route, in this case along Parramatta Road and the conductor punched the box for the street at which the passenger should have disembarked by. 'Terminus' was probably at Concord

Very few operators appear to have asked the OPA to customise the tickets with their own name, Mc Vicars is one but the

In the period after WW2 many private operators, facing rising costs and reducing revenue dispensed with conductors. Many bus designs of the time were not suitable for one-person operation and in these drivers were not required to issue tickets.



MTA tickets: top stock ticket, middle company and lower special design.



The Blacktown ticket has the most basic information fare and serial number.
Brien's route was short and only divided into three sections.

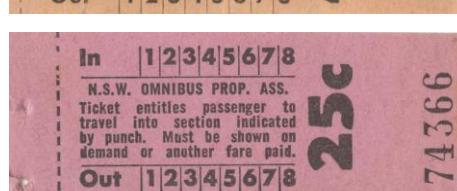
As well as MTA tickets many companies printed their own designs.

Some smaller operators continued to use archaic flimsy tickets long after the introduction of machine issued tickets.

Tickets from around 1965-67 were printed with sterling and decimal values.

Large collections of unused flimsy tickets have passed into museum's archives, collector's hand, or rubbish tips, as companies mechanised or went out of business.

Most private operators used flimsy tickets and the examples following are illustrative but not exhaustive.



Hunters Hill ticket promoting its bus hire service.

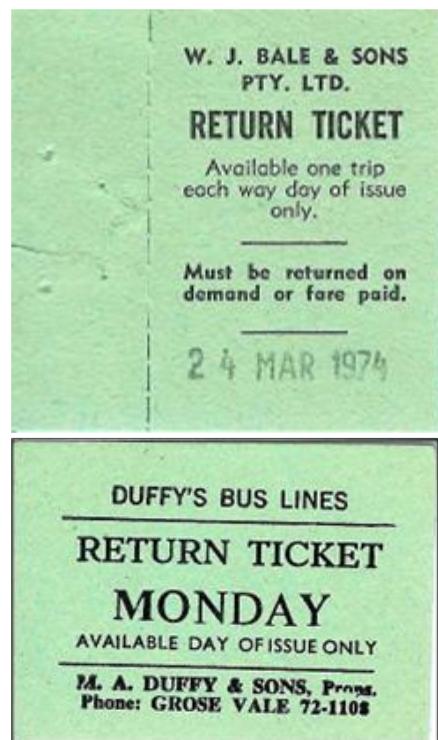
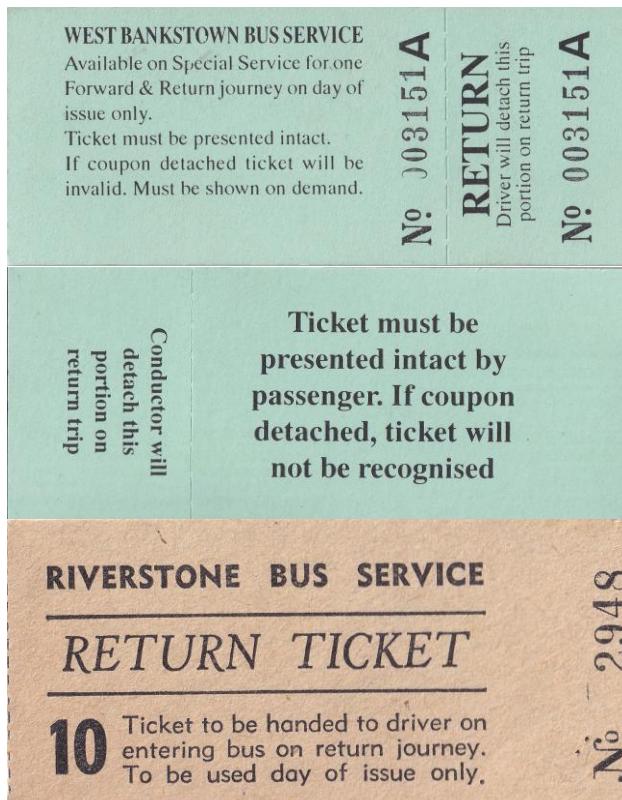
NSW OPA stock tickets including a dual currency issue from 1966.

Card tickets

Card tickets were used where a longer ticket life was required. This included

- Return – valid for two trips, usually indicated as In and Out
- Weekly – one return trip a day between specific points, either Monday to Friday or Monday to Saturday. Many weekly tickets had the letters L and G on them.
- School weekly - Monday to Friday, sometimes limited to certain trips
- Tourist
- Sports

Return Tickets

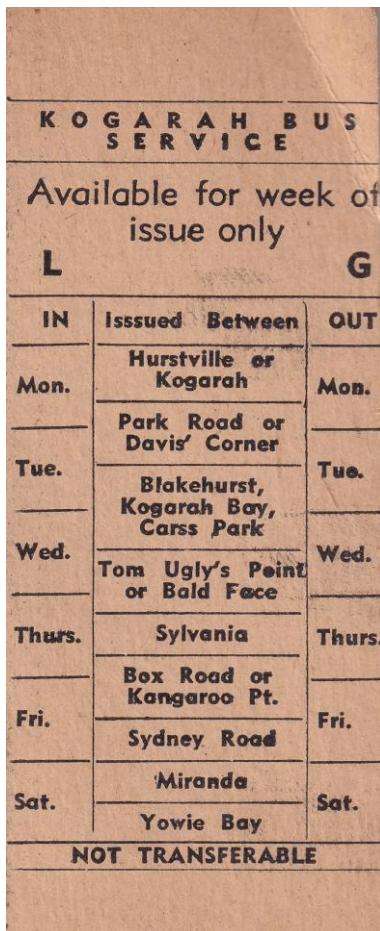


Duffy's use of preprinted day is unusual.

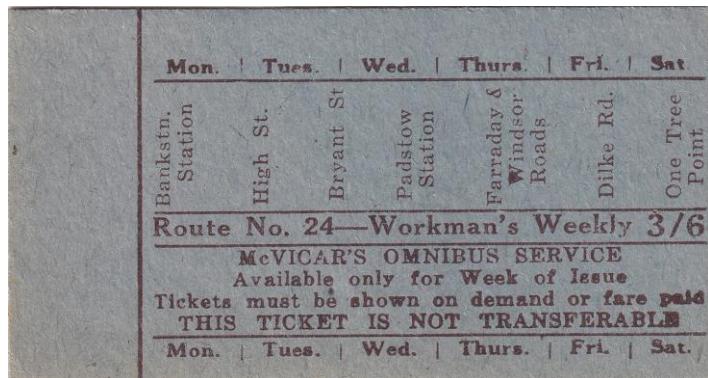
Examples of return tickets. Top West Bankstown BS with coupon and conditions repeated on the back.

Others where the whole ticket is returned to driver on return.

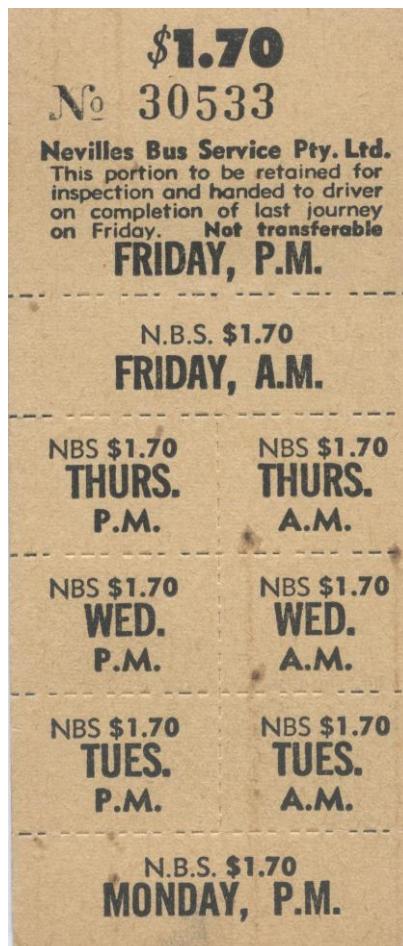
Weekly Tickets



Six-day weekly ticket. On issue punched for gender, L or G, and the two between locations and possibly stamped with a week number, then punched for each trip.



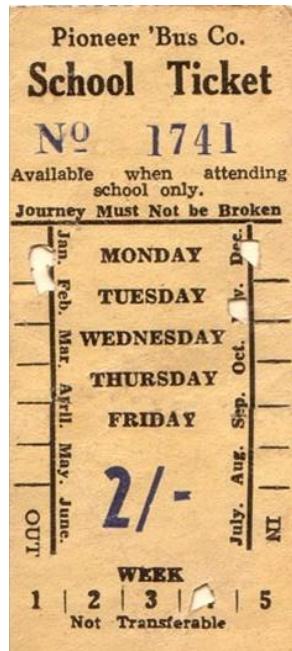
McVicars's six-day weekly, no gender requirement



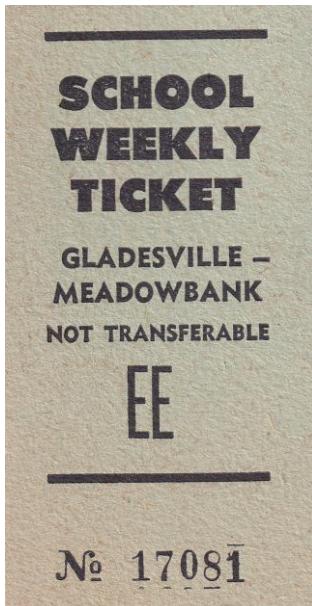
The most basic weekly ticket for East Killara Lindfield BS. No preprint, value or location. Only two stamps for route and week 43.

No punching required. Whole weekly ticket purchased on Monday morning then tabs returned to driver each trip.

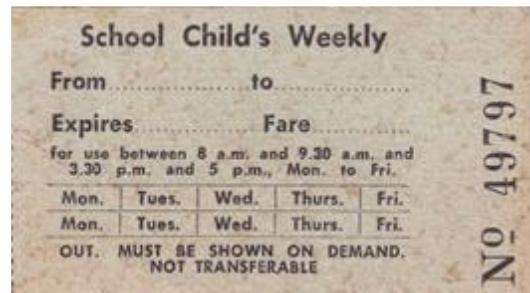
School Tickets



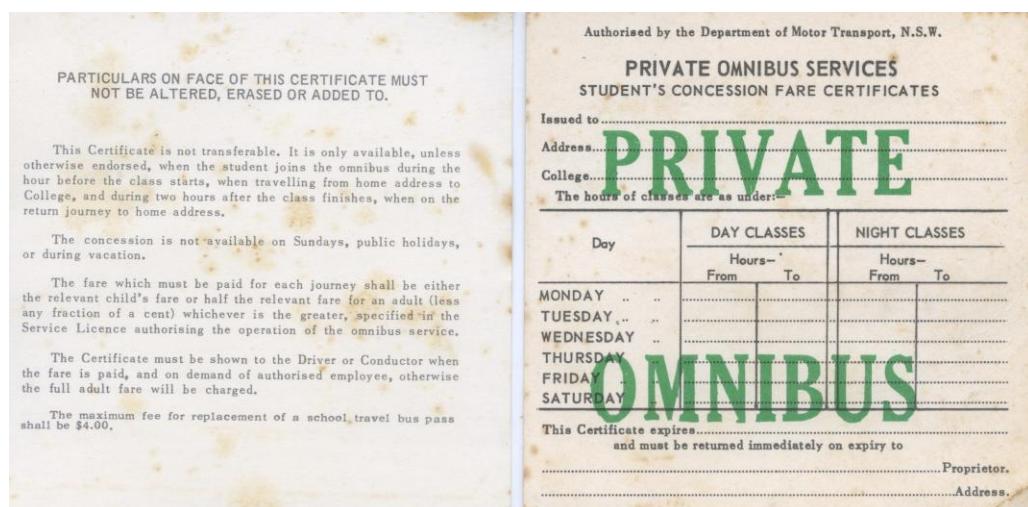
Pioneer school weekly ticket punched for only four trips in week 4. Given terms are longer perhaps there were tickets for other weeks.



School weekly available on route 152. The EE may be a week code.



Examples of weekly school tickets with trip time limitations. The top one is a general ticket filled in on issue, probably not on the bus. The lower one is specific to the operator in the Liverpool area over-stamped with a raised fare.



Tertiary students had to apply for a certificate showing their name and classes attended and which enables them to purchase concession fares.

Sport

Sports tickets are rare on private operators services..



Ticket issued for special services from Auburn to Harold Park by Wilcox of Auburn. Different card colours would be used for different nights.

Ticket Machines

The technology of flimsies and card tickets was antiquated and in NSW the era lasted long after other operators had moved to machine issued tickets.

The system was open to abuse by both passengers and drivers and needed monitoring by inspectors and accounting staff. It was also burdensome in the bundles of pre-printed tickets needed that stocked and controlled. A change in fares might see low value tickets needing written off, new tickets printed or complex combinations issued.

Tracking the sales was complicated and required a lot of manual records. A driver, or conductor, had to record the number of each value of ticket sold on each trip in their journal. At the depot at the end of a shift these journals had to be tallied with the ticket cases, and cash banked.

By the 1930s various manufacturers had addressed these problem and ticket machines came into use.

The Bell Punch company developed the *Ultimate* and *Solomatic*. These kept registers of the number and value of the ticket range sold and simplified the accounting process. They still required preprinted tickets and could only issue a limited range of values.

The solution was to include a printing facility in the machines with ability to select the fares

The Department of Government Transport opted for the Bell Punch Ultimate and Ticket Issuing Machine (TIM) systems, the OPA choice was the Bell Punch Solomatic

Solomatic



Driver's view of a well-worn Solomatic with decimal fare values. On the left is a counter showing the value of tickets issued.

In 1924 Bell Punch acquired Automaticket, a small organisation formed for importing American ticket issuing machines into the UK primarily for use in cinema box offices, and this started the company's research and development of ticket issuing machines in all fields. It soon developed mechanisms of its own which obviated the American imports.

In 1927 Control Systems was incorporated, for the purpose of acquiring and consolidating the direction of the growing diverse activities of the Bell Punch Co.



A supply of Solomatic tickets.



The badge for a Solomatic,



Solomatic tickets, most are printed with the fare facing the passenger. The middle ticket 'upside down' and shows the faint signs of cancellation date

From these acquisitions two Bell Punch machines were developed. The Solomatic was a large machine designed for installing in one-person buses whilst the Ultimate was designed for conductors.

Most Solomatic machines had slots for six ticket types. For each slot here was a lever in the back of the machine for the driver to press and the ticket was issued from a slot at the top front.

Solomatic tickets were printed in long strips and folded every fourth ticket to fit into the machine. Ultimate tickets were identical but rolled around a core. A sprocket hole separated each ticket. Tickets were printed by the Bell Punch (Australasia) Company. Being significantly smaller than flimsy ticket there was less print on each ticket, and most were of the same design. The top row was the ticket serial number, below which is a title box in which the operator's name was optional, and most tickets carried

the stern warning 'Must be shown on demand or another fare paid.' The bottom of the box showed the machine number and date issued imprinted when the conductor pressed the lever down. The ticket value was overprinted, usually in blue, but upside down from the other print so the conductor could read it easily. A variety of fonts were used for this. A few operators had the ticket value inside the box.

Some operators had adverts printed on the back of the ticket.



**Are you a
keen fare-collector?**

However enthusiastically you run your business, you will not be able to avoid delays unless you use a really efficient Fare Collection System. That is why most bus-operators nowadays consult the Bell Punch Company. They have representatives everywhere—and that means your part of the world—ready to give you personal advice on fare collection problems. There is certain to be a system that can easily solve your difficulties. Why not write to us for the name of your nearest consultant today?

THE SOLOMATIC
For one-man bus operation giving pre-printed coloured tickets from driver to passenger in a second, with automatic overprint of stage, date, etc.

BELL PUNCH CO. LTD.
(SYSTEMS DIVISION)
THE ISLAND UXBRIDGE MIDDLESEX
Tel: UXBRIDGE 38211
Cables: BELPUNCH UXBRIDGE

Member of the Lamson Industries Group

BUS & COACH, July 1965



**COLLECTING
YOUR FARES
WITH THE
GREATEST OF
SPEED!**

More and more people are going places—and they want to get there faster! But even the latest modern transport lags behind unless it's streamlined by an efficient, go-ahead Fare Collection System. That's why you should consult Bell Punch Company—which specialises in solving individual problems. There is Bell Punch expert representation all over the world, ready to help you maximise your collection, minimise your revenue losses, and build up a tradition of speedy, successful service and passenger good-will.

the SOLOMATIC
for one-man bus operation giving pre-printed coloured tickets from driver to passenger in a second, with automatic overprint of stage, date, etc.

BELL PUNCH EXPORT CO. LTD
39 ST. JAMES'S STREET, LONDON, S.W.1
CABLES: BELPUNCH, LONDON

A MEMBER OF THE LAMSON INDUSTRIES GROUP

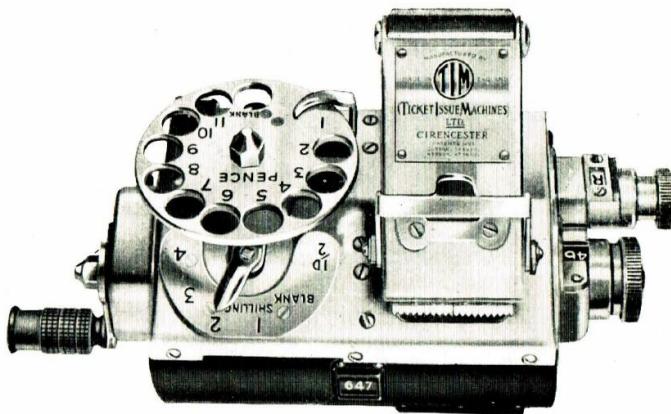
BUS & COACH, January 1962

1960s advertisements for the Bell Punch Solomatic

TIM – Ticket Issuing Machine



Ticket number 8793, issued by machine 355 on 10 April 1983, class '0000' fare 50cents. This may be a second-hand machine from those used by the Government between 1951 and 1955.



A TIM Major from the system guide.

At least one operator, Bosnjaks, used the TIM.

The TIM was invented by FE Langdon and patented in 1932. They were manufactured in Cirencester in England. TIMs were originally designed for use by a conductor but could be mounted on a stand for use by a driver.

The TIM Major allowed up 71 values, selected by the dial. Tickets could show ticket class, stage or section issued at, route number, machine number, ticket serial number, date issued, and fare paid.

The ticket was printed in purple on paper strip roll.

The machine registered cash value of tickets issued making easy the writing up of the journal.

TIMs were imported by Melbourne bus company Eastern Suburbs Omnibus Services.

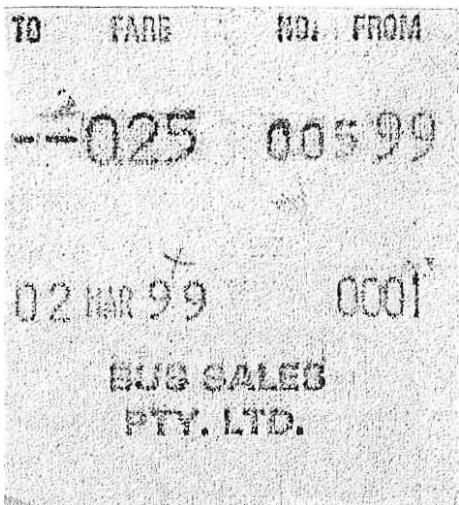
Almex



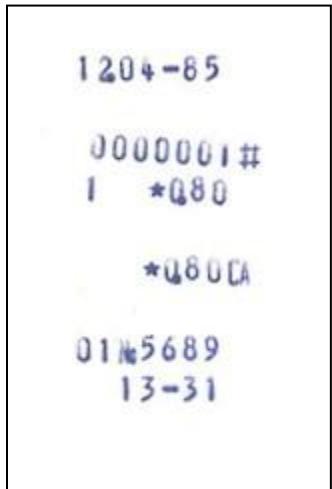
The Almex A was introduced in the late 1960s in Sweden. It was designed for a larger range of fares. It had thumb-operated keys to select fare, up to \$9.99, and section boarded, which were then printed on individual tickets from a blank roll. Each printed ticket contained the company's name, machine number, ticket number and date. Printing, dispensing and zeroing of the keys is carried out in one operation by depressing a single lever. The machine also contained an audit strip with details of all tickets issued.

Several bus companies used Almex machines:

- Cleary Bros
- Chester Hill Bankstown Bus Service
- Deanes Group
- Fairlines Bus Service
- Hunters Hill Bus Co
- North & Western Coaches
- Pearce Omnibus
- Seven Hills Bus Co
- Tuck Lee Bros



Cash Registers and PCs



For a short period, some operators used cash registers to issue tickets. The most popular was the Sharp. These produced very basic tickets basically like milk bar receipts.

The Punchbowl Bus Co Sharp ticket contained only numerals. Posters had to be put up in buses to explain what they meant!

As cash registers developed they became a Personal computer (PC) with a cash tray and thermal printer attached as peripherals. This enabled much more detailed tickets to be printed.

Thermal printers were used as it is the cheapest printing technology and was ideal for ephemeral items such as bus tickets. However it fades rapidly in sunlight, so few examples survive.

These tickets carry much more information such as expanded section names.



Wayfarer



Wayfarer 2000 ticket machine

Presently manufactured by Transmach, and previously by Schlumberger and Parkeon, the wayfarer was one of the earliest computer-based ticket systems.

The Wayfarer was first used by Forest Coachlines, Hillsbus and Westbus (CDC) and became the standard used by Transport for NSW. It was the basis of the T-Card trial as it could read smartcards.

From 6 December 2013 STA route 333 buses were Opal enabled with Wayfarer machines but no tickets were printed.

Tickets printed by Wayfarers were thermally printed and sensitive to light resulting in fading. Ticket formats are programmable and thus a large variety of formats were possible.



Examples of Wayfarer tickets. The green Westbus logo was preprinted on the ticket roll.