

# WEDNESDAY ACTION GROUP

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## WHY?

The Wednesday Action Group has, once a week, been peacefully campaigning on open public space to bring important political matters to the public's attention in the Melbourne CBD since 1999. For most of this 20 year period, private security has called police to stop us campaigning outside Southern Cross Station, claiming Southern Cross Station is **private property**. We have held our ground and have refused to move, on every occasion.

We have decided to make August 2019 "**Southern Cross Station Month**" and will be campaigning outside the Station (corner Collins and Spencer St) from 12:00pm to 1:00pm on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> August to highlight this ludicrous situation. In a democratic society it is critical citizens are able to peacefully use open public space to air their opinions.

## THE BACKGROUND

In 2001 the Civic Nexus consortium, a subsidiary of IFM Investors, an Australian investment group that currently invests on behalf of 27 not for profit industry based superannuation funds with 140 billion dollars in assets, under the leadership of The Hon. Greg Combet AM (the former Secretary of the ACTU and Federal Labor parliamentarian) entered into a public-private partnership with the Victorian Government.

It took nearly 5 years to rebuild the station. In exchange Infranexus Management, a subsidiary of IFM Investors was, in 2006, given a 30 year lease to operate and maintain Southern Cross Station. This agreement generates a very healthy profit for IFM Investors.

## SO WHAT?

Public private partnerships tend to spell disaster for the public. Agreements are private and cannot be accessed by the public, although hundreds of millions of dollars of public money is transferred to private companies. In Southern Cross Station's case, public space (the footpath outside the Station) has been reduced to just 90cm. The footpath outside every other private business in the CBD stretches anywhere between two to three metres. The privatisation of public footpaths is akin to privatising access to the beach. Traditionally, Australians have been able to protest on the footpath. You would think that trade union industry based superannuation funds that are linked to trade unions that are being legislated out of existence would be the last people to stop the public from utilising public space to protest.

It's time this ludicrous situation was once and for all addressed for the sake of all Victorians.

Dr. Joseph Toscano / Convenor Wednesday Action Group

CC: The Hon. Greg Combet AM – Chair, IFM Investors

CC: The Hon. Daniel Andrews (Premier)

CC: Mr. Luke Hilakari – Secretary Victorian Trades Hall Council