Mildura Passenger Rail Feasibility Study

Submission by Mary J. Chandler

My name is Mary Chandler. I was born in Mildura and apart from my years away at Boarding School and University, I have lived at Cardross and Red Cliffs. I am a local writer, historian and conservationist and for 12 years I have been on the committee of the Red Cliffs Historical Steam Railway, which runs a tourist 2 gauge steam train at Red Cliffs.

Introduction

My submission reviews the feasibility of reintroducing passenger trains on the Mildura line, in light of the recent restoration of the line allowing higher train speeds.

Over the past few days I have attended the Mildura Railway Feasibility Study community consultation sessions in Swan Hill, Ouyen and Mildura.

The following is part of a notice received inviting communities to come to one of the sessions to have their say about the future of public transport services in the region.

“Mildura Rail Feasibility Study
The Department of Transport has commenced a feasibility study into returning passenger rail services to Mildura. As part of this study the department is seeking feedback from the community on current travel patterns and potential transport improvements.

Community consultation sessions.

Five community consultation sessions will be held in the region in March 2010. Local communities in North-West Victoria are invited to come along to one of the following sessions and have their say about the future of public transport services in the region.”

I cannot let these sessions pass by without comment. The four communities along the Mildura rail corridor were absolutely horrified at the way these sessions were conducted. A very small advertisement appeared in the local paper of three of the
communities: one community announcement was placed in a paper from a different town. Consequently, there was very little publicity plus very little time for these communities to attend the sessions. The Mildura Passenger Return Action Group on the other hand, made sure that locals were aware of what was pending. We were delighted that 1200 to 1300 people attended the community meeting at Mildura.

We lost our passenger train in 1993 and for the last 17 years have been without this essential mode of transport. During this time submission, petitions and requests for return of the train have been submitted to a very uncaring Government. I am attaching a history of this period.

History of Government Statements and Promises regarding Train Services

The following are direct quotes and statements:

1/ “…and one of the most important things we must do is make sure that all Victorians have access to a high quality transport systems, wherever we live and whatever means of travel we use.” Premier Steve Bracks- Meeting our transport challenges Connecting Victorian communities-overview May 2006

2/ -For the past 6 years, the Victorian Government has taken strong action and made major new investments to build a modern, safe and reliable transport network across Victoria-from the inner city to the smallest country town; from Melbourne’s out suburbs to our growing regional centers.” Premier Steve Bracks- Meeting our transport challenges Connecting Victorian communities-overview May 2006

3/ -“Despite increasing pressures, Victoria’s transport system is in good shape. But as our population grows and our lifestyles and work patterns change we must make sure that our transport system keeps up with our travel needs.” Premier Steve Bracks- Meeting our transport challenges Connecting Victorian communities-overview May 2006

4/ -“Right across Victoria and a wave of new projects will build better transport connections, deliver major improvements to public transport, and create communities and neighborhoods that are attractive and healthy places to live and work.” Premier Steve Bracks- Meeting our transport challenges Connecting Victorian communities-overview May 2006

5/ -“We need to plan ahead to tackle these issues – and we need to link long-term planning for our cities, suburbs and communities that encourages travel options that are smarter, cleaner and healthier.” Mr. Peter Batchelor, Minister for Transport- Meeting our transport challenges Connecting Victorian communities-overview May 2006
6/ -“Through major investment and new projects over the next 10 year, we aim to build a transport system that maintains Victoria’s high standard of liveability and helps us to manage our growth in a responsible, sustainable way – creating better travel choices for all Victorians and ensuring the proper planning and delivery of transport infrastructure for the benefit of future generations.” Mr. Peter Batchelor, Minister for Transport - Meeting our transport challenges Connecting Victorian communities-overview May 2006

7/ -If you live in a regional centre, small country town or remote community – You will be able to travel to Melbourne using faster, more frequent and more convenient rail services and in comfortable and modern trains. Meeting our transport challenges Connecting Victorian communities-overview May 2006

8/-Managing strong growth in freight is also critical to Victoria’s economic development. Alongside Meeting Our Transport Challenges, the Government is commitment to improving freight transport and is undertaking a range of initiatives such as the Melbourne Port@L strategy, to be released in 2006, which will deliver strategies to improve freight connections across Melbourne and Victoria… Meeting our transport challenges Connecting Victorian communities-overview May 2006

9/ -To ensure Victoria maintains this enviable position, attention must be paid to the transport network upon which the State is built. Meeting our transport challenges Connecting Victorian communities-overview May 2006

10/ -Upgrade to infrastructure and key safety systems over the past 6 years have maintained high standards of safety across Victoria’s public transport network. Meeting our transport challenges Connecting Victorian communities-overview May 2006

11/ -Over the last 2 decade, demand for train travel by commuters has grown 43%, with a further 6.5% growth in the past half-year. Meeting our transport challenges Connecting Victorian communities-overview May 2006

12/ -The Government will also upgrade regional transport interchanges to make it easier, faster and more convenient to connect from buses to rail services. Meeting our transport challenges Connecting Victorian communities-The Plan May 2006

13/ -Mildura rail line upgrade
Subject to receiving $20 million of AusLink funding and commercial negotiation with the track operator, the Government will invest $50 million to works on the rail track between Ballarat and Mildura. The rail line from Ballarat to Mildura is approximately 450 km in length, with 240km of track currently under speed restriction due to the quality of the line.
We will upgrade the standard of the track to allow greatly improved freight services to the north-west of Victoria. Achieving higher quality rail infrastructure to this
region will be an important first step in reintroducing passenger rail services to the Mildura corridor.
The Government will continue to work through the wide ranging and complex issues to improve services along this corridor. *Meeting our transport challenges Connecting Victorian communities-The Plan May 2006*

14/ -“Maintaining the liveability of our cities, towns, suburbs and communities means changing our behaviour, *leaving our cars at home more often and taking up more sustainable, healthier forms of travel.* Meeting our transport challenges Connecting Victorian communities-The Plan May 2006

15/ -“Climate Change not only threatens our plants and animals, but also infrastructure, business, tourism and communities.” Premier Steve Bracks-*Our Environment our Future Sustainability Action Statement July 2006*

16/ -“We are acting now to prepare for the unavoidable impacts of climate change including the risk of bushfires, droughts and storms.” Premier Steve Bracks-*Our Environment our Future Sustainability Action Statement July 2006*

17/ -“Our goal is to make Victoria a sustainable state by responding to the challenge of climate change, restoring our natural assets, using our resources more efficiently and *reducing our everyday impacts.*” Mr. John Thwaites, Minister for Environment and Water-- *Our Environment our Future Sustainability Action Statement July 2006*

18/ -*Transport contributes 16.5 per cent of Victoria’s greenhouse gas emissions*- reducing these emissions is central to an effective greenhouse response in this state.- *Our Environment our Future Sustainability Action Statement July 2006*

19/ -We will help an extra 100,000 Victorians make environmentally smart travel choices with a $135 million expansion of the Travel Smart program over the next four years. *Our Environment our Future Sustainability Action Statement July 2006*

20/-“We are determined that the projects we deliver will generate lasting benefits for all Victorians from Melbourne’s CBD to our smallest rural towns, from the State’s biggest companies to small local businesses, and from new, high-tech industries to our traditional base of manufacturing and agriculture.” Premier Steve Bracks-*Building one Victoria: Projects that are growing and strengthening the state June 2005*

22/-In 2004, country passenger rail services returned to Ararat and Bairnsdale after an absence of more than a decade. *Patronage has grown strongly* on both returned services. *Building one Victoria: Projects that are growing and strengthening the state June 2005*
23/- The Government is progressing the **reinstatement of passenger rail services to Mildura** and South Gippsland, with investigations currently under way to determine necessary works and project costs. **When completed, this program will deliver substantial social, economic, business and environmental benefits to people living along Victoria’s regional transport corridors.** *Building one Victoria: Projects that are growing and strengthening the state June 2005*

24/- Under the Rail Gauge Standardization Program, the Government and Pacific National are developing a masterplan for investing in the State’s intrastate rail-freight network, including **consideration of standardizing** key rail freight corridors. *Building one Victoria: Projects that are growing and strengthening the state June 2005*

25/- “It is now widely understood and accepted that climate change, due to the enhanced greenhouse effect, poses a serious threat to the world community. Evidence continues to mount that our climate is changing, that human activities are responsible for this change, and that the impacts on the world’s environment, societies and economies will be detrimental.” -Mr. John Thwaites, MP Minister for Environment-Victorian Greenhouse Strategy action plan update April 2005

26/- “We cannot continue on a ‘business-as-usual’ path.” Mr. John Thwaites, MP Minister for Environment-Victorian Greenhouse Strategy action plan update April 2005

27/- “To rise to the challenge of climate change we need to approach that couples a long-term vision with an understanding of the interim steps that will help us achieve that vision.” *-Victorian Greenhouse Strategy action plan update April 2005*

28/- Our approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions will focus attention on the need to move to a less greenhouse gas intensive economy over time. This is critical if Victoria is to play its part in national and global efforts to address the threat of climate change over the coming century. *- Victorian Greenhouse Strategy action plan update April 2005*

29/- Over the long-term, deep reductions in greenhouse emissions will be needed. *- Victorian Greenhouse Strategy action plan update April 2005*

30/- Transport: 19.3 Mt in 2002 increase of 2.9 Mt or 17.4% from 1990 levels! *- Victorian Greenhouse Strategy action plan update April 2005*

31/- 10% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from the Government’s passenger vehicle fleet by June 2006. *- Victorian Greenhouse Strategy action plan update April 2005*
Articles from newspapers:

1/ 25/10/99 Sunraysia Daily
Mr Bracks said that under Labor Party policy the government would review closed passenger lines.

2/ 21/10/99 North West Express
We will return that faith and trust by governing for all Victorians and all of Victoria.
Mr. Steve Bracks

3/ 30/10/99 Sunraysia Daily
New Minister for Transport Peter Batchelor has told Member for Mildura Russell Savage he would consider returning the passenger service if sufficient interest and support is shown by the Mildura community.

4/ 12-05-2001 Herald Sun
Country commuters have won a multi-million dollar Budget boost, with rail services to four key regional centres set to reopen within three years. Premier Steve Bracks yesterday announced the windfall, restoring services from Melbourne to Ararat, Bairnsdale, Leongatha and Mildura. Mr. Bracks said the trains would travel up to 130kms/h, improving local tourism and development. More than 100,000 extra trips are expected to be taken on the four corridors each year, **including an extra 32,000 trips on the Mildura line.**
And travel times will also be slashed with almost two hours to be shaved off the Mildura trip.
Victoria’s three independent MPs, who have fought for the return of rural rail services, welcomed the move. **“I congratulate the Bracks Government on its vision and its commitment to equity for regional Victoria, especially the Mildura corridor passenger train,”** Mildura MP Russell Savage said.

5/ 19-05-01 The Weekly Times
Transport Minister Peter Batchelor flew to Mildura yesterday to tell the mineral sands industry of **the State Government’s plans for rail standardization.**
Mr. Batchelor said the Government was setting up an up-to-date, competitive freight network.
He said the standardization process and rail upgrade would create about 700 jobs, many of which would be in rural Victoria.

6/ 3-09-2001 Sunraysia Daily
The re-opening of the rail services to Mildura could be earlier than the deadline as originally set out by the Victorian Government.
**Transport Minister Peter Batchelor has confirmed that the Government would consider options for the re-opening of both the Mildura and South Gippsland services prior to the late 2004 target.**
Mr. Batchelor said potential operators of the Mildura Rail line have been invited to submit tenders by the end of this year.
“The Bracks Government is working hard to reverse the economic and social isolation that regional Victorians suffered following the closure and neglect of country rail lines by the Kennett Government,” he said.

“We are opening rail lines, not closing them down.”

Mr. Batchelor said the rail services would deliver faster, more comfortable and convenient travel for ten of thousands of people in regional Victoria.

“Importantly, re-opening of country rail services will significantly boost tourism and regional development, and encourage population growth in the regions and towns serviced by the rail lines,” he said.

“We have now entered the next stage of the tender process for the Mildura, Warrnambool, Shepparton and South Gippsland lines.”

7/ 19-04-2001 Sunraysia Daily
Mr. Savage said, “But this line is not just for passengers.”
“It can be justified for other reason, including faster freight and huge mineral sands industry that is starting up. For these reasons, I am sure we will be favorably considered in the lead up to the May Budget.”

Mr. Savage said since the rail passenger service to Mildura was stopped in 1992, the passenger train rolling stock had been stored but many parts, including bogies, were missing.”

8/ 17-05-2001 North West Express
Mildura Passenger train service is to be returned.
Member for Mildura Russell Savage relayed the news on Friday following an announcement in Ararat by Premier Steve Bracks a few minutes earlier.
Mr. Savage said Sunraysia passenger service would be connected to the fast train from Ballarat and staged to coincide with standardization.
“The Minister for Transport, Peter Batchelor, has advised me the estimated journey time will be between five to six hours,”
Mr. Savage said Mildura had suffered from the deprivation of an adequate public transport system like no other community.

9/ 12-07-2001 North West Express
Mr. Savage said the Bracks Government was committed to re-opening the Mildura line, and lines to Ararat, Bairnsdale and South Gippsland.
Mr. Savage said the Bracks Government was fully funding the re-opening of the Mildura line, with a pool of funding allocated for standardization, and a separate pool for capital works and operating subsidies.
He said $32.7 million would be spent over three years to restore country-passenger rail links, with $7.7 million dedicated to the restoration of the Mildura lines. Additional funding of $140 million over five years had also been set aside for conversion of country rail lines to standard gauge.

10/ 12-05-07 Sunraysia Daily
The Mildura to Melbourne passenger rail service is back on track.
Mr. Bracks said the 2001-2002 State Budget would include $7.7 million in works to restore the Mildura line to a standard suitable for passenger trains.
He said the decision to axe the service eight years ago had removed a vital transport link to Melbourne and represented a “massive blow to the people of Sunraysia”.

“The decision to re-open the Mildura line follows the completion of a feasibility study by the Government which showed that restoring the rail service would deliver faster, more comfortable, convenient travel and regional development,” he said.

Transport Minister Peter Batchelor said passenger trains would return to Mildura once works to upgrade the rail line had been completed and new Sprinter style trains had been fitted out.

“It is expected that the passenger services will recommence in 2004,” Mr. Batchelor said.

“However the Government is exploring options for a faster schedule for the delivery of the new service and will invite tenders from the private sector for the operation of the service.” Mr. Batchelor said the process would be in part determined by the Government’s standardization program, with standardizing rail lines between Mildura and Portlanda priority project.

Engineering studies had found that 453 kilometers of track between Mildura and Ballarat required some work, primarily to replace defective sleepers, he said.

11/ 17/06/05 Sunraysia Daily

“Some of the people interviewed had also heard Premier Steve Bracks say during a Cabinet visit to Mildura, that the train would return in 2004.” Mr. Barry Bishop

12/ 5/07/05 Sunraysia Daily

Mr. Savage said the rail line had been run down since it was privatized under the Kennett Government. You can see the proof of it; because the Northern Line to Mildura is so run down you can’t go more than 20kmh in some parts. No money has been spent on it for seven years.

“If 10,000 citizens sign a petition decrying the removal of the passenger service in 1994 and a further 10,000 indicate they would use the service if it were returned (as indicated in a survey I conducted in 2000) then it is very clear that people in this region want the train back.” Mr. Russell Savage, Member for Mildura

13/ 26/03/05 Sunraysia Daily

-“I have indicated that it is one of the four rail lines previously closed that we would re-open,” Mr. Bracks said.

-“I reiterate that we will reopen the passenger rail line to Mildura,” he said.

-“It is high on the government’s list of commitments.”

-“We have succeeded in reopening two, and this is the next of the remaining two on which we will proceed-I can give that assurance to the Member, and I ask him to transmit that as widely as possible.”
- “It is a key government commitment,” he said.
- “We have reopened Bairnsdale; we will now seek to re-open Mildura and that will be on our immediate timetable.”
- “…I believe that only this government has the capacity to reopen the rail line given the alternative policies we have heard in this house.” Mr. Bracks said.

He was speaking in Parliament on the week of the 26 March, 2005.

14/ 3-11-2005 North West Express
Having waited for four years, the return of the passenger train is now one year overdue and represents another broken promise by the Bracks Government, according to Member for Mildura, Russell Savage.

A total of $20 million for the return of the Mildura Passenger Service and $90 million for standardization of the north western rail corridor have been allocated by the Bracks Government and yet not one sleeper has been put on the track and not one dog spike driven.

Appearing on the ABC’s Stateline program recently the Minister for Transport, Peter Batchelor, refused to recommit to the return of the Mildura Passenger Train giving the excuse that no maintenance had been done on the track.

“Peter Batchelor should accept the blame for the now dangerous track standards due to his abysmal failure to buy back track access when Freight Australia sold out to Pacific National. The track standard is so bad now that it may have to be closed.”

“The Premier can wax lyrical about his commitment on the return of the Mildura Passenger Service but if it is not delivered within two terms of government it is a broken promise,” he said.

15/ 23-10-05 Sunday Age
“He was left with no alternative,” he said. “They have sold him out; they have thrown him to the wolves.”

He said Mr. Savage had campaigned for the return of the passenger rail service to Mildura, which the Government had not delivered.

16/ 25-7-06 Sunraysia Daily
Asked to comment on the accident, Member for Mildura Russell Savage MLA said he was sure the accident was caused by the fact the track had received no maintenance in seven years.

“Those sleepers are old and rotten and probably just gave way under the weight of the two locos.”

“The answer is for more investment in rail. People want safe, cheap rail freight movement for passengers and freight,” Mr. Savage said.

The Victorian Government has budgeted for a $73 million upgrade of the track between Ballarat and Mildura and decided to use concrete sleepers to replace the thousands of wood sleepers which are crumbling.

17/ 16-4-2005 North West Express
“No regional maintenance has been done for the last seven years- not one sleeper has been inserted on a cyclic maintenance basis and if you look at the speed restrictions in the corridor between Ouyen and Mildura, you see they are
down to 20 kilometers an hour. I cannot imagine why any contract would be given to a company that would allow that sort of safety decline to occur, it is unacceptable.”

“I do not want to be too derogatory to the opposition, but it took away from the community a passenger service that was viable. This government promised to put it back—I know it is hard to put things back, but when the government makes such a promise it has to deliver it. The Bracks Government has failed abysmally on standardization and the passenger rail return.”

“My calculations indicate that 450,000 standard gauge concrete sleepers at $50 each between Ballarat and Mildura would only cost $22 million. Ballast and signaling should cost, conservatively, less than $100 million for the total investment.”

“Currently Victoria has a poor rail safety standard and the reality is that we as a consequence have seen serious derailments at Hattah, Lascelles and in the Dunolly district.”

“…rail safety and rail infrastructure are important and the government needs to deliver on the promises it made back in 2000,” he added.

18/ 25-10-99 Sunraysia Daily
Mr. Bracks also said the Labour Government would examine the possibility of a return to passenger rail travel and a new Mildura Courthouse as major components to the region.

“We won’t be shunning you,” Mr. Bracks said.

“We won’t be turning our backs on regional and country Victoria as the previous Premier did in playing punishment politics…that has ended,” he said.

“There will be no vindictive politics.”

Mr. Bracks described as “significant” that his first regional visit was to Mildura.

He said it was “such an important regional centre” which he wanted to support and enhance much more that the previous Coalition Government.

Mr. Bracks said the Coalition had shunned Mildura for the past seven years and that factor added significantly to his weekend visit.

“I totally reject the style of politics which says that because the former Premier’s Party was not supported in this region you shun it and starve it of money, starve it of capital works, turn the tap off,” he said.

“I think that is disgusting and miserable politics.”

“I think you will see a new era now… a new era of getting rid of the past nature of governing the whole of the State.”

19/ 3-11-07 North West Express
The Transport Minister, Peter Batchelor, last week rejected claims there has been little progress on the return passenger trains in Mildura.

“Re-opening the Mildura line has not been easy for a number of reasons. Track leasee Freight Australia refused to grant the Government access to the Mildura line for a long time. It was not until Pacific National took over late last year that we could get in there and have a look,” Mr. Batchelor said.

“What we found was major deterioration and a substantial maintenance backlog along the 450 kms of track.”
Mr. Batchelor said the project had now progressed, with $11.3 million set aside in this year’s budget to begin detailed investigations into cost and design for re-opening. “It is a lot easier to shut down a track than it is to re-open one,” he said.

“We remain committed to this project, which follows the successful return of passenger services to Ararat and Bairnsdale.

20/ 17-11-05 Herald Sun

In June 2001 Mr. Batchelor said passenger rail services to Mildura would be up and running by the end of 2004, or even earlier.

While about $20 million has been set aside for preliminary work on the project, not one sleeper or spike has been inserted into the rail line so far because ownership issues meant the Government could not gain access to the line for inspections.

Since then, the Government has found the tracks have suffered major deterioration and are in no fit state for passenger trains.

21/ 17-11-2005 North West Express

In May 2001, the Bracks Government promised the people of Western Victoria it would convert the Portland-Mildura rail line to standard gauge. More than four years on, nothing has been done.

The Bracks Government claims that Moving Forward will drive growth and prosperity in rural and regional Victoria but rail standardization- a vital infrastructure project for the regional economy that will drive investment and secure jobs- is standing still. How can the people of country Victoria trust anything Steve Bracks tells them?

Standardization of the rail link between Mildura and Portland would have presented an ideal opportunity to move large quantities of mineral sands from Sunraysia through the Port of Portland, creating many jobs and generate export revenue dollars.

By continued dithering, procrastination and excuse-peddling on the rail standardization issue for the past four years, the city-centric Bracks Government has stalled jobs growth and economic development in Portland, Mildura and all the town centers that lie between.

22/ 16-11-05 The Weekly Times

More bus services to connect small towns to regional cities and refurbish V/Line trains are part of a $51 million package to improve public transport in country Victoria.

The State Government has promised $34.8 million for more buses on existing routes in larger regional centers such as Shepparton, Mildura and Wodonga.

(Encouraging greenhouse gases the whole way!!!)

Mr. Batchelor said another $20 million would be allocated to developing regional transport hubs to improve freight movements between country and city.

“Priority will be given to initiatives that increase freight carriages by rail and deliver statewide benefits to industry,” he said.
State and Regional Development Minister John Brumby said the funding would help achieve the Government’s goal of boosting the amount of freight shipped to port by rail to 30 per cent.

23/ 2-11-06 The Buloke Times
“The 45-year lease arrangements put in place by the previous Government in 1999 were flawed, and have resulted in significant deterioration of the network,” Mr. Bracks said.
“The new arrangements will allow for better maintenance of the tracks by the Government and facilitate better access to the network for major rail projects.”
“Taking the track back into public ownership will enable out Government, if re-elected, to provide greater certainty to our struggling farmers who are suffering the effects of one of the worst droughts on record, rising interest rates and spiraling fuel costs.”
“Upgrading the tracks will also help us to deliver better train services, giving farming communities better options for freight movement.”
Mr. Bracks said a more competitive rail environment was in the best interests of Victorian farmers, exporters and industry, and would be a major step towards reducing the number of heavy trucks on our roads.”

24/ 4-11-06 Sunraysia Daily
“Time has run out for the Victorian freight network,” he said. (Alliance chairman Cr. Geoff White at the Mayoral Summit on rail freight)
“The better alternative is for the next State Government to provide vision and leadership coupled with appropriate funding, connective and competitive freight network.”
“The decision to buy back the lease was the first step to pulling the country and regional rail freight network back from the brink of disappearing altogether,” Mr. Ruge said.
“What is now required from the next State Government is vision, commitment and appropriate funding to provide country and regional Victoria with a world-class rail freight System.”

25/ 26-7-05 Sunraysia Daily
According to Mr. Russell Savage there has been a steady decline in V/Line service standards along this route. (Swan Hill to Melbourne)

26/ 17-7-2005 The Guardian
“I have received many complaints-particularly from our elderly travelers who rely upon this service—that the toilets at Swan Hill station are inadequate and unclean, there is no buffet car on the train and there is no luggage facility to book luggage through from Swan Hill to Melbourne, which obviously places a great deal of strain on elderly travelers who are being shuffled back and forth between bus and train numerous times in one journey.” Mr. Russell Savage MLA

27/ 3AW Radio Interview
Russell Savage was one of three Independents who supported the formation of a minority Labor Government in 1999 but now says the Premier has since proven
himself untrustworthy. Savage is furious that the Bracks Government has broken a promise to deliver passenger rail service to Mildura and are planning a toxic waste dump at Nowingi. Transport Minister Peter Batchelor says the government intends to keep its promise to deliver passenger rail to Mildura saying they are now working more cooperatively with the new owner Pacific National.

28/ 28-10-2005 3MA FM (Mildura)
The Bracks Government denies claims there has been little progress returning passenger rail service to Mildura in an attempt to counter criticism from Russell Savage. Peter Batchelor claims it has invested huge amounts of money. He blames Jeff Kennet and Freight Australia.

29/ 28-10-2005 ABC Mildura Swan Hill (Mildura)
The State Government stands accused of breaking promises and wasting money on rail services in North West Victoria. Russell Savage says the Government allocated $110 million for passenger rail and standardization in Mildura but no work has been done. Steve Bracks claims the Government is still committed but only partly supports the return of the passenger rail.

30/ 12-4-2005 Sunraysia Daily
Mr. Gibson is a passenger rail operator who has operated passenger services in Australia and New Zealand, was in Mildura yesterday “having a look around” and heading for Broken Hill.

He said Mildura could either be on the end of a declining branch line or, if the line was standardized, upgraded and the northern link to the transcontinental built, the city could become a thriving regional multi-modal freight centre.

“If this connection to the north from Mildura was built, the main beneficiary would be Victoria,” Mr. Gibson said.

“Trains could be double-stacked from Geelong and Melbourne through Mildura and into the national network to Perth, Darwin and elsewhere, increasing freight yields enormously.”

“The beauty of this alternative routing is that 1.5 kilometre long double stacked trains could keep motoring without having to be reconfigured to fit through tunnels and under bridges.”

Mr. Gibson said passenger use rail could be stimulated if the northern link was built.

“With the northern link, Mildura could be well positioned to be a service center, preparing and cleaning passenger trains.”

“We could have seats and sleepers from Mildura to Darwin and just seats to Melbourne and back-different train sets.”

31/ 15-6-2005 The Weekly Times
Mr. John Brumby says:
The Bracks Government has been working hand-in-hand with regional communities since 1999 to repair the damage and make country Victoria a great place to live and raise a family.

We don’t pretend to have got everything right, but **we have worked hard to restore pride in country Victoria and achieve these milestones by listening and working with communities.**

The Bracks Government is committed to growing country Victoria and building a vibrant community based on growth, prosperity, better services and opportunity.

**We have a vision and a belief in country Victoria**

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**32/ 19-8-2006 Sunraysia Daily**

*The possibility of a north-south rail link through Sunraysia between Melbourne and the transcontinental line* has “grown legs”, with an engineering and economic study proposed.

The long-mooted rail link would require a rail bridge across the Murray River and a couple of hundred kilometres of new rail track to meet the trans-continental in western New South Wales.

Such a project would provide Melbourne with a rail link to Darwin and quicker access to horticultural markets in Asia.

Sunraysia Mallee Economic Board executive Board executive officer Andrew Millen said the board and Wentworth Shire Council will develop a submission for the engineering and economic study under the Federal “Sustainable Regions” program.

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**33/ 25-10-2005 Media Release from the Member for Mildura**

*Russell Savage MLA*

Having waited for 4 years, the return of the passenger train is now one year overdue and represents another broken promise by the Bracks Government, according to Member for Mildura, Russell Savage.

A total of $20 million for the return of the Mildura Passenger Service and $90 million for standardization of the north western rail corridor have been allocated by the Bracks Government and yet not one sleeper has been put on the track and not one dog spoke driven.

“Many isolated citizens with expectations of a return of the passenger service in 2004 have died waiting for the promise to be fulfilled. What a disgrace this government has become.”

“Every town from Ballarat to Mildura has been sold out by this government because the return of the passenger service has been BRAXED.”

“The government can find a billion dollars plus to run a second rate sporting event, the Commonwealth Games, for a mere 10 days but cannot find the money to fulfill promises in the time-frame pledged-how dismal.”

“Had the government put the same enthusiasm and effort into the return of the Passenger Train services as they have put into the Toxic Waste Containment Facility this outcome would have been achieved by now,” he added.
Is it little wonder that Mildura people are fed up with the broken promises, the lack of accountability and bias shown by the Government and DoT?

The poorly organised Mildura Passenger Rail Feasibility consultation process, was more than highly disappointing for its lack of transparency and due process in addressing important social, economic and environmental issues.

Yes, finally the upgrading of the line has been completed to 1993 status. But why was it not upgraded in tandem with standardisation for both freight rail and passenger rail, so that Mildura could become part of the national rail network to cope with future growth in passenger rail?

Most people thought the whole process on the Wednesday night was a sham, just an exercise to appease a rural community for a few more years. To be fair, it must have been very uncomfortable for the panel up there on the stage, but Mildura people are clear on one thing - WE WANT OUR TRAIN BACK.

In Saturday’s Sunraysia Daily dated March 20, 2010:

“The meeting facilitator and panel members agreed to just about everything.

Extractor fans off, extractor fans on, take a trip on the coach/bus service, change the process of the meeting, take community feedback back to Melbourne, investigate complaints about V/Line service…even apologising for the consultation process that ‘didn’t work.’

Seemingly, the only item the panel did not agree on was the overall worth of a Mildura passenger rail service.

At the end of the day, only time will tell if Mildura will get its passenger rail service returned 17 years after it was axed by the Coalition Government

If that does happen, the unfortunate fact is that, for many, it will be 17 years too late.”

To add insult to injury, the DoT organised a telephone survey on Mildura’s public transport needs, which occurred whilst 1300 people were in attendance at the community meeting on Wednesday. DoT is claiming that this occurrence was a coincidence and like the rest of the community I am sceptical to say the least. I am
not at all surprised that the telephone survey was organised on the night of the meeting.

Maybe one day the Brumby Government will treat rural people with the respect they deserve. Maybe one day the Brumby Government will acknowledge that rural people have voting rights and pay taxes. Maybe one day the Brumby Government will acknowledge that rural people are not stupid and that they have the same rights as their city cousins, and that is the right to a decent rail service. Of course at the moment, their city cousins would debate the issue that they have a decent, efficient and safe rail service.

**HISTORY**

George and William Benjamin (known affectionately as “W.B.”) arrived in Mildura in 1888 to transform the area into an oasis of vineyards and citrus groves. George was a man of vision, an engineer who recognised the untapped potential of the Murray River and his brother, W.B. was the businessman. W.B. began to build ‘Rio Vista’, his symbol of the optimism and faith he had in the future of Mildura.

In its infancy the only means of transport to was by River Boat and during years of low river, the community was cut off from Melbourne and Adelaide and horseback was the only other means to leaving the district.

George Chaffey believed the Victorian Government would extend the rail line to Mildura once the colony was established, but Mildura was left high and dry without a train until 1903.

The arrival of the first train to Mildura was somewhat of an anti-climax. Originally scheduled to arrive at 4.10 a.m., it was about four hours late, being greeted by a small crowd of mainly school children. There were about a dozen passengers and the "mixed" train consisted of locomotive T263, a freshly painted sleeping car (from use on the Portland line), a first and second class "corridor" car, goods trucks, water tanks and a guards van.
The Official Opening

"Oft do the spirits of great events stride on before the events, and in today already walks tomorrow" - so quoted "The Mildura Cultivator" - the vanguard of Mildura's long fight for a railway, as it reported on the historical day of Friday 13-11-1903 when the settlers of Mildura officially celebrated the opening of their railway connection with Melbourne. During the week flags were flying throughout the town, the Workingman's Club provided "an excellent arch" and bannerettes of all colors were displayed across the streets and avenues. "The Mildura Cultivator" even printed a day earlier to enable their staff to take part in the opening celebrations.

Residents began to make their way to the station early in the morning to see the first of two special trains arranged by the Victorian Railways. The first special, due to arrive at 8.50 a.m. was delayed en route and eventually arrived at 9.40 a.m. This train left Melbourne at 6.27 p.m. the previous evening and included a Victorian and South Australian Railways joint stock "Boudoir Car" normally used on the Adelaide Express. The second train, which left Melbourne 35 minutes after the first, arrived at 10.15 a.m. conveying the Governor, Sir George Sydenham Clarke, parliamentary
representatives including Mr. J.W. Taverner M.L.A. (Minister for Lands and Member for the district), and Mr. Scobie M.L.A. for Wentworth (N.S.W.). In all, 135 visitors, including 24 members of Federal and State legislatures and visitors from Melbourne and Ballarat, arrived by train for the occasion. With the arrival of the Governor's special train, the Mildura Rifle Club Band played "See the Conquering Hero Comes" followed by the National Anthem.

The Governor addressed the crowd of several thousand people formerly declaring the line open and asserting that "there was no line in Victoria which has been so much needed" - a sentiment which is recorded as "evoking hearty cheers". The Governor made reference to Mildura's struggle to survive and how the people had kept faith in the settlement. The President of the Shire of Mildura, who hosted the day's celebrations, was Cr. W. B. Chaffey - one of the founding brothers of the settlement. It must have been a proud moment for this man, who, with his brother George, at the invitation of the Victorian government, had carved the Mildura settlement from the Mallee wilderness, and dreamed of the prosperity that would follow the unification of irrigation and rail connection to Melbourne.

Free train rides to Yatpool and back were provided by the Railway Commissioners using open wagons and the few passenger carriages available and were happily enjoyed by hundreds of happy school children and equally happy adults. A banquet in the Shire Hall attended by over 200 people, completed an historic day for Mildura.¹

Bruce McLean, an avid railway history buff, highlighted the special trains that arrive in Mildura from 1903 to 1959. It reveals just how important the rail service was to Mildura over the years, and the loss to Mildura for the 17 years that we have been without our passenger train.

**Special Trains 1903 - 1959**

"Special Trains" are trains that are scheduled for a unique purpose and additional to passenger and goods trains normally timetabled for a particular line. This segment covers known special trains that have been provided for specific occasions, special purposes, track testing and emergency circumstances. For Commissioners Inspection Trains and Railway Enthusiast Groups, refer to their separate sections.

**1903**

Two special trains, not carrying goods, and providing sleeping accommodation, were arranged to arrive at 8.50 a.m. and 9.30 a.m. on 13-10-1903 for the official opening celebrations of the railway to Mildura. The first special included sleeping car O29 and

¹ Mildura Railway History, Bruce McLean Version 1 - 2003
6ABAB composite first and second class car, arrived at 9.40 a.m. after leaving Melbourne at 6.27 the previous evening. The second special departed 35 minutes after the first and arrived in Mildura at 10.15 a.m. The train carried the governor, a large parliamentary party including Mr. J.W. Taverner, Minister for Lands and local member. Contemporary newspaper reports do not provide details of the arrangements made for the departure of the trains from the Victorian Railways newest and furthermost terminus from Melbourne.

1904

A special train was provided for the Governor of Victoria to travel to Mildura. It was delayed by "hot boxes" (overheating axle bearings) causing concern as there was no means of communication available for much of the journey through the desolate mallee. The governor's special train departed from Mildura on 31-12-1904 at 10.30 a.m. and arrival at Woomelang 7.30 p.m.

1907

A party of parliamentarians visited Mildura on 19-10-1907 using a special train. The train was described in the Maryborough "Advertiser": "...it comprised four new sleepers which are to be added to the Adelaide Express at an early date and a large express van with a new type of passenger engine." The carriages referred to were "Melbourne", "Ballarat", "Wolseley" and "Adelaide" built at Newport Workshops for Victorian and South Australian Railways joint stock use between Melbourne and Adelaide. They were issued for traffic on 17-10-1907 and must have been immediately allocated for this special parliamentary trip to be in Mildura two days later. These carriages were renamed in 1910 as "Loddon", "Glenelg", "Finnis" and "Torrens" and saw most of their life in service on "The Overland". The express van was most likely CE1 or CE2.

1908

An Adelaide sleeping car was also provided on a special train for a visit by the Governor General to Mildura during July 1908.

1910

A special train ran from Mildura to Merbein and return on 14-3-1910, before construction the line had been completed (it was opened on 4-7-1910). The special train consisted of an R Class locomotive and two passenger carriages. It departed Mildura at 9.30 a.m. and took 40 minutes for the journey owing to the new track not yet being ballasted. The return journey departed from Merbein at 2.30 p.m. The purpose of the special train is not known.

1911

Two special trains were chartered to run from Mildura to Merbein for the inaugural meeting of the Merbein Turf Club on 19-1-1911. The trains departed Mildura at 11 a.m. (184 passengers) and 1 p.m. (211 passengers), returning at 6.15 p.m.. It was possible to utilise carriages standing over in Mildura as Thursday was not a "train
day". Similar arrangements were made for the following year with the Mildura Stationmaster empowered to arrange a second special for return traffic if warranted.

1918

At 11 a.m. on 28-1-1918, sightseers, particularly children, crowded the approaches to Mildura railway station, the overhead bridge to the goods yard and most likely other advantage points down the line from Ouyen, to witness the arrival of Wirth's Circus special train from Pinnaroo. In fact this was the first of two trains required to convey the circus from town to town.

The Circus train was at Woomelang on 1-2-1918.

1920

A special train ran on Monday 26-4-1920 from Mildura to Yatpool for passengers to attend a race meeting. It returned to Mildura about 8.30 p.m.

1921

Wirth's Circus train arrived at Ouyen from Pinnaroo on 26-1-1921 and then moved on to Mildura on 27-1-1921. It was then at Birchip on 28-1-1921.

Trains from Mildura and Ouyen were provided for the Yatpool races on 2-5-1921. A special train was scheduled to leave Mildura at 12.01 p.m. and arrive at Yatpool at 12.35 p.m., departing at 7 p.m. and arriving at Mildura at 7.42 p.m.. Another special was scheduled to depart Ouyen at 10.20 a.m. It was to depart Yatpool at 7.15 p.m. and arrive at Ouyen at 10.00 p.m.. Both trains were stopping at all intermediate stations.

Football special trains were run between Mildura and Merbein to cater for games being played in either town on Wednesdays and Saturdays for the 1921 football season, with good patronage, particularly on Saturdays.

In December 1921, Messrs. W.H. Wilson, W.J. Bowring and J.W. Washington, prominent Mildura retail businessmen, arranged with the Stationmaster (Mr. J. Gibson) for guaranteed special trains between Merbein, Mildura and Red Cliffs to encourage shoppers to come to Mildura. The guarantee was arranged with the businessmen individually and was not promoted by the Trader's Association. The special trains were scheduled to operate on Saturday 17 and 24 December 1921 to the following timetable:

Leave Merbein 1.30 p.m. Arrive Mildura 1.55 p.m.
Leave Red Cliffs 2.30 p.m. Arrive Mildura 3.00 p.m.
Leave Mildura 9.30 p.m. Arrive Merbein 10.05 p.m.
Leave Mildura 10.30 p.m. Arrive Red Cliffs 10.55 p.m.
Although not shown on the published timetable, the one locomotive and carriage(s) would have provided the whole service commencing from Mildura and running between the guaranteed timetable as a special "not taking passengers". There were no contemporary reports to indicate whether the service was successful, however with the success of the suburban service introduced in June 1922 between Merbein, Mildura and Red Cliffs, it is possible that the businessmen had no trouble in recovering their guarantee and the railway department enjoyed high levels of patronage.

1922

Wirth's Circus train again visited Mildura on 7-7-1922.

The Development Resources Train (known as the "Reso" train) arrived in Mildura from Melbourne about 8 p.m. on Monday 28-8-1922 with more than sixty leading Melbourne businessmen, educationalists and publicists. The train consisted of three sleeping cars, a dining car, a staff car and the Commissioners' "Norman" car. The train was scheduled to depart for Merbein the following day at 9.30 a.m. and leave for Mildura at 6.00 p.m.. On Wednesday it would travel to Red Cliffs and depart there at 5 p.m. for Ouyen.

This was the first "Reso" Tour and covered the Mildura and Swan Hill Lines between 28-8-1922 and 2-9-1922.

1923

An excursion from Mildura to Merrinee was arranged by the Come-To-Red Cliffs-Week Committee on 18-10-1923. There were 100 passengers on board when the train departed from Mildura and a further 50 joined at Red Cliffs. The special train arrived at Merrinee a little after midday and after lunch, the return journey arrived back at Mildura about 5.45 p.m.

1924

The fifth tour by the "Reso" train arrived in Mildura on 4-3-1924. This was the second visit to the north-west and passengers (known as "Resonians") were from Warrnambool and surrounding districts.

The "Reso" train was described as "a small hotel on wheels". It featured sleeping cars for passengers and crew, smoking and writing rooms, a bar, lavatory accommodation including showers and telephone communication between different sections of the train.

The train was hauled by a K Class locomotive (instead of a DD type previously used), and the consist included the dining car "Avon" and the Commissioners' "Norman" car. The tour visited the Mildura, Red Cliffs, Millewa line, Underbool, Woomelang, Donald and Ballarat districts during the period 3 to 8 March 1924.

Perry Bros, Circus train toured from 5-6-1924 to 12-6-1924 with performances at Pinnaroo, Murrayville, Underbool, Ouyen, Mildura, Merbein and Redcliffs.
1925

Wirth's Circus train travelled to Mildura for performances on 20-6-1925.

Dr. Fenton paid a guarantee of 6 pounds to run a special trip from Mildura to Redcliffs on 14-12-1925 using the AEC Rail Motor based at Mildura.

Special trains known to have been run in 1925 are recorded as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Journey</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Other Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12-9-1925</td>
<td>Murrayville to Ouyen</td>
<td>North Western Mallee Football Association Final</td>
<td>234 passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-9-1925</td>
<td>Pinnaroo to Murrayville</td>
<td>Murrayville Presbyterian function at Murrayville</td>
<td>46 passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10-1925</td>
<td>Ouyen to Carwarp Werrimull to Carwarp</td>
<td>Visit to Mr. P. Stewart's farm at Carwarp</td>
<td>146 passengers 21 passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-10-1925</td>
<td>Merbein to Carwarp</td>
<td>Mildura Traders</td>
<td>726 passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-10-</td>
<td>Merbein to Ouyen</td>
<td>Ouyen Races</td>
<td>36 passengers 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AEC rail motor standing at the Redcliffs platform after arriving from Mildura. Photo: Wilf Henty, courtesy John Kiely
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Passengers</th>
<th>Horses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14-10-1925</td>
<td>Ouyen to Murrayville</td>
<td>Murrayville Show</td>
<td>98 passengers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pinnaroo to Murrayville</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>60 passengers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-10-1925</td>
<td>Redcliffs to Mildura</td>
<td>Redcliffs Masons</td>
<td>37 passengers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-10-1925</td>
<td>Ouyen to Pinnaroo</td>
<td>Pinnaroo Show</td>
<td>346 passengers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-10-1925</td>
<td>Merbein to Carwarp</td>
<td>Carwarp Races</td>
<td>74 passengers 18 horses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-10-1925</td>
<td>Murrayville to Pinnaroo</td>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>19 passengers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-11-1925</td>
<td>Carwarp to Mildura</td>
<td>Redcliffs Returned Soldiers Dinner at Mildura</td>
<td>90 passengers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-12-1925</td>
<td>Mildura to Redcliffs</td>
<td>Dr. Fenton</td>
<td>Nil passengers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-12-1925</td>
<td>Mildura to Redcliffs</td>
<td>Redcliffs Masonic Lodge</td>
<td>37 passengers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1926

"The Better Farming Train" was the creation of Mr. Harold Clapp, Chairman of Commissioners and was, according to the official Victorian Railways history "VR to `62", a mobile college disseminating information on agricultural science, domestic economy and public health. The train was scheduled to give demonstrations on the Mildura line at Donald on 26-7-1926, Woomelang 27-7-1926, Underbool 28-7-1926, Murrayville 29-7-1926, Walpeup 30-7-1926, Carwarp 31-7-1926, Mildura 2-8-1926, Ouyen 3-8-1926, Speed 4-8-1926, Birchip 5-8-1926, Watchem 6-8-1926 and St. Arnaud 7-8-1926. The train consisted of fourteen carriages and wagons and was 670 feet long.

![The Better Farming Train. 1928. Photo: Victorian Railways 191-2](image)

Large crowds visited the long train with the words "Better Farming Train" in large characters along the distinctively painted orange-yellow vehicles. The train consisted of the "Victoria" parlour car, flat trucks fitted for sheep and pigs, a louvre truck, a flat
truck carrying a lecture platform, two carriages devoted to veterinary exhibits, wool and wheat, a flat truck for fitted for exhibiting poultry, a baby welfare lecture car and a domestic car. Other carriages were provided for the train staff, electric generating plant and stock fodder.

The Better Farming Train at Mildura on 2-8-1926. The train is standing on the crane road. Photo: Arthur Giddings

The twelfth tour by the "Reso" train was scheduled from 19 to 24-7-1926. The train was scheduled to visit Creswick, Maryborough, Underbool, Murrayville, Carwarp, Redcliffs to Meringur line, Red Cliffs, Mildura, Birchip, St. Arnaud and Daylesford.
K107 arriving at Underbool with a Reso Tour train in July 1926. K107 was issued to traffic in May 1923 and was renumbered to K147 in June 1940. Note the camels to the right of the photo. Photo: Bob Whitehead Collection

The Mildura Trader's Association hired a special train with a guarantee of 18 pounds to run from Mildura to Redcliffs on 20-10-1926. There were 369 passengers with 329 boarding at Mildura and 40 at Irymple. The guarantee was covered by fares amounting to 19 pounds and 1 penny.

Special trains known to have been run in 1926 are recorded as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Journey</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Other Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19-1-1926</td>
<td>Redcliffs to Mildura</td>
<td>Redcliffs Masons</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-2-1926</td>
<td>Ouyen to Merrinee</td>
<td>Merrinee Races</td>
<td>8 passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Merbein to Merrinee</td>
<td></td>
<td>74 passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-2-1926</td>
<td>Mildura to Redcliffs</td>
<td>Redcliffs Masons</td>
<td>26 passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4-1926</td>
<td>Donald to Ouyen</td>
<td>Ouyen Races</td>
<td>78 passengers 9 horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Merbein to Ouyen</td>
<td></td>
<td>51 passengers 8 horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pinnaroo to Ouyen</td>
<td></td>
<td>40 passengers 5 horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-4-1926</td>
<td>Pinnaroo to Cowangie</td>
<td>Cowangie Races</td>
<td>66 passengers 2 horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ouyen to Cowangie</td>
<td></td>
<td>71 passengers 4 horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-4-1926</td>
<td>Mildura to Redcliffs</td>
<td>Redcliffs Masons</td>
<td>23 passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Journey</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Other Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-4-1926</td>
<td>Merbein to Carwarp</td>
<td>Carwarp Races</td>
<td>63 passengers 12 horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-4-1926</td>
<td>Redcliffs and Merbein to Mildura</td>
<td>Mildura Grand Carnival</td>
<td>775 passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-4-1926</td>
<td>Redcliffs and Merbein to Mildura</td>
<td>Mildura Grand Carnival</td>
<td>1469 passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Woomelang to Mildura</td>
<td></td>
<td>124 passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-10-1926</td>
<td>Ouyen to Pinnaroo</td>
<td>Pinnaroo Show</td>
<td>350 passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-10-1926</td>
<td>Mildura to Redcliffs</td>
<td>Mildura Traders</td>
<td>369 passengers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**1927**

Wirth's Circus arrived by special train at Mildura on 17-6-1927. The train, of 560 tons weight, was hauled by an N Class locomotive, from Ouyen.

Special trains known to have been run in 1927 are recorded as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Journey</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Other Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-1-1927</td>
<td>Ouyen to Merrinee</td>
<td>Merrinee Races</td>
<td>17 passengers 2 horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Merbein to Merrinee</td>
<td></td>
<td>95 passengers 15 horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-4-1927</td>
<td>Redcliffs and Merbein to Mildura</td>
<td>Mildura Carnival</td>
<td>949 passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Werrimull to Mildura</td>
<td></td>
<td>69 passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-4-1927</td>
<td>Donald to Ouyen</td>
<td>Ouyen Races</td>
<td>38 passengers 10 horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Merbein to Ouyen</td>
<td></td>
<td>67 passengers 4 horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pinnaroo to Ouyen</td>
<td></td>
<td>43 passengers 11 horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-4-1927</td>
<td>Ouyen to Cowangie</td>
<td>Cowangie Races</td>
<td>76 passengers 16 horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pinnaroo to Cowangie</td>
<td></td>
<td>50 passengers 1 horse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-5-1927</td>
<td>Walpeup to Tempy</td>
<td>Walpeup Football Club</td>
<td>42 passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-6-1927</td>
<td>Murrayville to Pinnaroo</td>
<td>Wirth's Circus at Pinnaroo</td>
<td>49 passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9-1927</td>
<td>Pinnaroo to Ouyen</td>
<td>Ouyen Races</td>
<td>197 passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mildura to Ouyen</td>
<td></td>
<td>144 passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Donald to Ouyen</td>
<td></td>
<td>123 passengers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5-11-1927 | Meringur to Carwarp | Field day at Carwarp farm | 128 passengers
| Ouyen to Car Warp | | 51 passengers |

16-11-1927 | Mildura to Ouyen | Buffalo Lodge | 15 passengers

1928

The Better Farming Train made a return visit to north-west Victoria stopping at Carwarp 31-7-1928, Merrinee 1-8-1928, Meringur 2-8-1928, Werrimull 3-8-1928, Red Cliffs 4-8-1928, Ouyen 6-8-1928, Underbool 7-8-1928, Cowangie 9-8-1928 and Walpeup 10-8-1928.

A typical scene at a country location where the "Better Farming Train" has stopped to provide information on agricultural science, domestic economy and public health. Photo: Victorian Railways

Special trains known to have been run in 1928 are recorded as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Journey</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Other Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-1-1928</td>
<td>Ouyen to Merrinee</td>
<td>Merrinee Races</td>
<td>114 passengers 17 horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-3-1928</td>
<td>Ouyen to Mildura</td>
<td>Mildura Grand Show</td>
<td>116 passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Redcliffs to Merbein</td>
<td></td>
<td>598 passengers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-4-1928</td>
<td>Donald to Ouyen</td>
<td>St. Patrick's Races</td>
<td>58 passengers 12 horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Merbein to Ouyen</td>
<td></td>
<td>54 passengers 11 horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Journey</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Other Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-4-1928</td>
<td>Ouyen to Cowangie</td>
<td>Cowangie Races</td>
<td>43 passengers 7 horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pinnaroo to Cowangie</td>
<td></td>
<td>72 passengers 3 horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-11-1928</td>
<td>Merbein to Ouyen</td>
<td>Merbein Masonic Lodge</td>
<td>26 passengers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**1929**

The renowned Wirth's Circus was scheduled to arrive in Mildura on 14-6-1929 at 2.30 a.m.. It was then scheduled to run directly to Pinnaroo, departing from Mildura at 12.45 a.m. on 17-6-1929 and arriving in Pinnaroo at 8.46 a.m..

The "Reso" train made north-west Victoria its destination from 2-9-1929 to 7-9-1929. The special train of four sleeping cars, lounge, dining and "Norman" car visited Creswick, Maryborough, Mildura, Underbool, Pinnaroo, Birchip, St. Arnaud, Avoca, Ararat and Daylesford. The train was in Mildura on 3-9-1929.

Special trains known to have been run in 1929 are recorded as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Journey</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Other Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30-3-1929</td>
<td>Donald to Ouyen</td>
<td>St. Patrick's Day Races at Ouyen</td>
<td>52 passengers 22 horses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Merbein to Ouyen</td>
<td></td>
<td>65 passengers 11 horses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**1930**

A special train for Merrinee races was scheduled on 1-1-1930. The special departed Mildura at 9.05 a.m. for Merbein and returned to Mildura at 10.02 a.m. before departing again at 10.28 a.m.. After stopping at Red Cliffs at 11.00 a.m. it would arrive at Merrinee at 12.15 p.m.. A stop would be made opposite the race course for passengers to alight, however horses and other equipment would be unloaded at the station, about a mile further on. The special was scheduled to return from Merrinee at 7 p.m., reach Mildura at 8.30 p.m. and Merbein at 8.35 p.m..

**1931**

A special train for the Merrinee races was run from Merbein to Merrinee on 1-1-1931. A total of 53 passengers and 13 horses travelled.

A special train was run from Mildura to Melbourne on 11-4-1931 for the visit of Lord and Lady Baden-Powell. A total of 186 passengers travelled.

Wirth's Circus train travelled to Mildura for performances in June 1931 using a K Class locomotive to Mildura and return to Ouyen. A Dd Class locomotive was added to the K Class to take the train from Ouyen to Murrayville.
The Mildura Postmaster reported in October 1931 that a broadcasting licence was issued to a company that intended to visit various parts of the state, including Mildura for four days in November 1931.

1933

Wirth's Circus train travelled to Mildura with a K Class locomotive on 1-7-1933. On return to Ouyen, a D3 Class locomotive was added from Ouyen to Murrayville.

1934

The first day train to run from Mildura to Melbourne for many years departed at 8.15 a.m. on 16-10-1934 and was scheduled to arrive in Melbourne at 9.50 p.m. This special was run in conjunction with three other trains scheduled on 24-10-1934, 7-11-1934 and 14-11-1934 in connection with the Centenary Celebrations.

A Royal Train brought the Duke of Gloucester to Mildura on 31-10-1934. The 700-foot long train comprised Loddon (V&SAR sleeping car), Dargo (V&SAR sleeping car), Goulburn (special car) Pekina (V&SAR sleeping car) Avoca (dining car), State Car No.4, Norman (Commissioners car) and 19CE brake van. There were two locomotives on the train. The first sleeping car was occupied by the Royal staff, the second and third by officials and the fourth by press representatives.

Railway department officials protected the train at over 200 level crossings between Ballarat and Mildura and the Royal Train was preceded by a Pilot Train scheduled to run up to half an hour ahead. Mildura residents were warned that if they intended to go to the welcome reception at the Mildura recreation oval, no traffic would be permitted to cross at level crossings between the passage of the Pilot Train and the Royal Train.

The Duke of Gloucester joined the train at Ballarat on the evening of 30-10-1934 and the train spent the night halted at Cope Cope, south of Donald. The Royal Train arrived in Mildura at 2 p.m. After completing his engagements, the Duke rejoined the Royal Train at Redcliffs at 5.30 p.m. and the journey was halted at Litchfield to spend the night, arriving later the next morning at Ballarat.
Press cutting from "Sunraysia Daily" 5-11-1934 of the Duke of Gloucester's arrival in Mildura by special train on 31-10-1934. The vice-regal carriage is State Car No. 4. Source: Bruce McLean Collection

1935

The "Better Farming Train" visited the north-west in March/April 1935. The itinerary provided for stops at Tempy on 26-3-1935, Underbool 27-3-1935, Murrayville 28-3-1935, Ouyen 29-3-1935, Mildura 30-3-1935, Merrinee 1-4-1935, Meringur 2-4-1935, Werrimull 3-4-1935, and Redcliffs 4-4-1935.

Two carriages described as "Tait" cars (most likely BPL class cars) were attached to the usual evening train from Mildura on 18-3-1935 to convey fruit pickers. "Sunraysia Daily" reported that nearly 100 people, including "a sprinkling of women and young girls" crowded around the doors and windows of the carriages to bid the pickers farewell.

1936

There were 121 passengers on a special Easter Holiday Train Association train to Mildura which arrived at 10.30 a.m. on Good Friday 10-4-1936. The 9 carriage train was stabled on the riverfront between the Mildura Power Station and Town Pumps.
with the tourists having meals at the Grand and Commercial (later Wintersun and Hotel Mildura) Hotels.

A special train was scheduled from Melbourne to Mildura on 4-5-1936 for visitors to the annual May Bowling Carnival. The train arrived the following morning and arrangements were made for the Morkalla line train leaving Mildura at 5.45 a.m. to connect at Redcliffs to take any intending passengers for the branch line.

Perry Bros. Circus train arrived at Redcliffs on 24-6-1936, travelling from Walpeup. The train comprised 25 vehicles and performances were held at Ouyen, Irymple, Merbein and Birchip.

1938

Perry Bros. Circus train toured in February 1938 with performances at Pinnaroo, Murrayville, Cowangie, Underbool, Walpeup and Ouyen.

The special holiday train organised by the Holiday Train Association, with sleeping cars and a lounge car, arrived in Mildura on Friday 15-4-1938 at 10.30 a.m. The train was stabled on the line opposite the Mildura Rowing Club and departed for Melbourne on Monday 18-4-1938.

Wirth's Circus train travelled to the mallee for performances in October 1938 using locomotive N110. Performances were held at Pinnaroo, Ouyen, Mildura, Merbein, Redcliffs, Ouyen, Woomelang and Birchip.

1940

Wirth's Circus train toured the mallee from 12-10-1940 to 23-10-1940 showing at Pinnaroo, Ouyen, Mildura, Merbein, Redcliffs, Woomelang and Birchip. Locomotive N110 was used.

1942

A special train for the conveyance of fruit pickers was scheduled to depart Melbourne for Mildura via Castlemaine at 7.10 p.m. on Friday 13-2-1942. It was timed to arrive at Redcliffs at 5.44 a.m., Irymple 5.55 a.m. and Mildura at 6.05 a.m. the following day. This train is understood to be the first specially chartered train for conveyance of fruit pickers to Mildura.

Another special would arrive in Mildura on Sunday, travelling to the same schedule.

With the number of excess carriages at Mildura it was decided to run a special return to Melbourne for sitting passengers only. It departed at 8.45 p.m. on 16-2-1942. There were no air-conditioned carriages and seats could be reserved.

1944

A special train to convey harvest workers to Mildura was scheduled to depart from Melbourne at 8.35 p.m. on Friday 18-2-1944. It was scheduled to arrive the following
day at 9 a.m. Another special train for harvest workers was scheduled to depart from Nhill at 2.50 p.m. on Monday 21-2-1944 and arrive in Mildura at 6.35 a.m. the next day.

1945

A special train with harvest labour was scheduled from Horsham to Mildura on 9-2-1945. It would arrive in Mildura at 6.20 a.m. the following day.

1947

A special train was provided from Mildura to Melbourne for 400 students from the Mildura branch of the University of Melbourne on 7-12-1947.

1948

A special train conveying harvest labour was scheduled to arrive in Mildura on 11-2-1948.

1949

A special train carrying students for the Mildura branch of the University of Melbourne, arrived in Mildura on 15-3-1949.

640 harvest hands travelled on the first special fruit pickers’ train to Mildura for the grape harvest. It was scheduled to reach Redcliffs at 8.25 a.m. and Mildura at 9 a.m. on Sunday 6-2-1949. A further 500 pickers arrived on another special train on 17-2-1949.

The Governor of Victoria, Sir Edmund Herring and Lady Herring arrived in Mildura on 9-9-1949 for a tour of the Sunraysia district. During their travel and stay in Mildura they were accommodated in State Car No. 4. They were attended by Mr. John Freeland, the Victorian Railways senior conductor.

1950

The first special train for the 1950 grape harvest season arrived in Mildura on Sunday 5-2-1950 with more than 400 pickers on board. Another two trains with about 1,300 pickers arrived on Saturday 18-2-1950 and Sunday 19-2-1950.

A special train for fruit pickers was scheduled to depart Mildura at 7 p.m. on Friday 31-3-1950. Carriages for the train were formed by a special train that arrived that morning with 500 New Australians.

1951

Two special trains were scheduled to bring fruit pickers to Mildura for the 1951 grape harvest, arriving in Mildura on Sunday 4-2-1951 and 11-2-1951.
The green and gold Commonwealth Jubilee and Victorian Centenary Train consisting of eleven carriages and containing 200 yards of exhibits travelled to the north-west of the State during May 1951. It was open for inspection at Woomelang and Ouyen on 22-5-1951.

Green N430 at the head of the Victorian Centenary Jubilee Train at Ouyen on 22-5-1951. Photo: Bruce McLean Collection

The Centenary - Jubilee Train arrived in Sunraysia on Wednesday 23-5-1951. The first stop was at Irymple where it was officially welcomed to the Shire of Mildura. The train remained at the platform open for public inspection until 3.10 p.m.. Twenty
minutes later it was welcomed to the City of Mildura at Mildura railway station by the Mayor (Cr. A.R. Mansell).

Despite continuous rain, nearly 700 people visited the train during its stop at Irymple on 23-5-1951 from 11.30 a.m.. An official welcome by the Shire of Mildura took place under the verandah of the station with about 100 people crowding in from the rain.

The "Centenary - Jubilee Train" arrived in Mildura at 3.30 p.m. to be welcomed by about 400 people. The rain which had fallen throughout most of the day, held off for
an official welcome by the Mayor of the City of Mildura Cr. A.R. Mansell. A large party of school children made up some of the 2,300 people who inspected the train during the afternoon and night. The train was at Mildura following day, Thursday 24-5-1951. Nearly 6,000 people inspected the train in bleak weather which affected the anticipated attendance, given that a half-day holiday had been declared for the occasion.

On Friday 25-5-1951 the train was at Redcliffs, Saturday 26-5-1951 at Merbein before returning to Mildura on Sunday 27-5-1951 for another opening. The Governor of Victoria, Sir Dallas Brooks made an inspection during Sunday afternoon.

About 25,000 people visited the train during its five days in Sunraysia.

The Mayor of Mildura Cr. A.R. Mansell officially welcomes the "Centenary - Jubilee Train" to the City of Mildura. The wet weather held off for the welcome speech. The gentleman standing to the left of the Mayor is holding a microphone to record the speech for the local radio station 3MA. 23-5-1951. Photo: Sunraysia Daily
School children inspecting the State Electricity Commission of Victoria display in the "Centenary - Jubilee Train" during its stop at Irymple on 23-5-1951. Photo: Sunraysia Daily
Despite the overcast and wet conditions a large crowd, including school children, visited the "Centenary - Jubilee Train" during its stopover at Irymple on 23-5-1951. Photo: Sunraysia Daily

Centenary - Jubilee Train

The Victorian State Government, in conjunction with the Commonwealth Government, organised the "Centenary - Jubilee Train" to celebrate the anniversaries of the centenary of the establishment of the colony of Victoria, the granting of self-government, and the public discovery of gold. In addition, the jubilee of the Commonwealth of Australia was celebrated.

The "Centenary - Jubilee Train" was attractively painted in green and gold and consisted of locomotive N 430, eleven carriages with end doors to make a continuous passageway through the train and a van.
Within the carriages were displays featuring valuable and representative paintings from the National Art Gallery, rare manuscripts and prints, models illustrating the history of gold production, and models and pictures of national projects controlled by the various state departments. The Commonwealth government included displays by the Navy, the Army, the Air Force and the Post Office, a war materials exhibit from the Department of Supply and diagrams and maps of the Snowy Hydro-electric scheme.

During its 6,240 miles tour throughout Victoria from 1-2-1951 to 30-6-1951, the train visited 168 stations. 548,000 persons inspected the exhibits and an entertainment unit which accompanied the train, gave 100 performances which were attended by 96,000 people.

**North-west Victoria Visit**

The itinerary of the special train during its visit to the north-west of the state was as follows:

**Monday 21 May Depart Melbourne**

Arrive Woomelang

**Tuesday 22 May (Exhibition)**

Depart Woomelang 1.30 p.m.

Arrive Ouyen 2.30 p.m.

(Exhibition and Night Entertainment)

**Wednesday 23 May Depart Ouyen 8.45 a.m.**

Arrive Irymple 11.30 a.m. (Exhibition)

Depart Irymple 3.00 p.m.

Arrive Mildura 3.30 p.m.

(Exhibition and Night Entertainment)

**Thursday 24 May (Exhibition and Night Entertainment)**

**Friday 25 May Depart Mildura 9.30 a.m.**

Arrive Redcliffs 10.00 a.m.

(Exhibition and Night Entertainment)

Depart Redcliffs 9 p.m.
Arrive Mildura 9.30 p.m.

Saturday 26 May Depart Mildura 9.30 a.m.

Arrive Merbein 10.00 a.m.

(Exhibition and Night Entertainment)

Sunday 27 May Depart Merbein

Arrive Mildura (Exhibition)

Monday 28 May Depart Mildura 9 a.m.

The "Centenary - Jubilee Train"

Steam locomotive N430 was selected to haul this important commemorative train throughout Victoria and South Australia. It was painted hawthorn green trimmed with yellow and black and bedecked with national flags. It was also fitted with an air-operated brass bell. The special train consisted of eleven BPL Class carriages stripped of internal furnishings and painted in matching colors to the engine. With the guard's van, it made a total of 794 feet long and a weight of 355 tons.

N430 at the head of the "Centenary - Jubilee Train" at Spencer Street Station before the start of a country tour. The train visited the north-west of the State in May 1951. Photo: A.R.H.S. Archives
N430 prepares to depart Spencer Street station, Melbourne, with another "Victorian Centenary-Jubilee Train". 1951. Photo: Rev. Leon Marshall-Wood

1952

Three special trains were scheduled to bring hundreds of harvest workers to the Sunraysia district in early February 1952. The first special with 600 harvest hands arrived on Sunday 3-2-1952 and the others on Saturday 9-2-1952 and Sunday 10-2-1952.

Wirth's Circus train toured the mallee from 5-6-1952 to 15-6-1952 showing at Pinnaroo, Ouyen, Mildura, Merbein, Redcliffs, Woomelang and Birchip. An N Class locomotive was used to haul the train.

1953

Special trains were again utilised to bring harvest hands to Sunraysia for the 1953 grape harvest. An eleven car train with BPL cars was recorded arriving at Mildura on Sunday 22-1-1953.

The night of Tuesday 19-5-1953 involved a total of eight trains operating to and from Mildura. Four special trains - two from Mildura and two from Melbourne - were scheduled to move 2,000 cadets between the centres. In addition to these specials were the two normal passenger trains and two normal goods trains running in each direction.

A "Royalty in Photographs" train consisting of a carriage painted in blue and yellow and was scheduled to spend five months roaming over the Victorian rail network with
a display of photographs of members of the Royal Family together with replicas of the Crown Jewels.

The carriage was equipped with fluorescent lighting on the inside and was floodlit at night.

The special carriage arrived in Woomelang where it was on display before being transferred to Mildura on 3-7-1953 attached to a goods train. The display carriage was placed in the carriage shelter shed and the public was able to view the display until 6-7-1953. The carriage was transferred to Merbein on 7-7-1953 and then to Red Cliffs for two days on 8-7-1953. Unfortunately no other information on the carriage's schedule has been found.

More than 4,000 people inspected the carriage at Mildura.

1954

Royal Visit to Mildura

The royal visit by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh in 1954 was the first time a reigning monarch had visited Australia and Sunraysia was fortunate to be included in their tour of all states. Royal Tour Organising Committees were established at Red Cliffs and Mildura and were responsible for making arrangements for the royal visit on 25-3-1954.

The Red Cliffs Royal Visit Committee made arrangements with the Victorian Railways in June 1953 for special trains to be provided to Red Cliffs from Donald, Pinnaroo, and if traffic warranted, a third train from Woomelang. A controversy arose when the Mildura Royal Visit Committee protested against the trains not coming through to Mildura. They also had the support of Mildura City Council who wrote to the Commissioners on 23-10-1953 and followed up with a deputation to visiting railway officials on 1-12-1953. The result was a decision to terminate the special trains at Mildura.

Red Cliffs and Mildura stations were prepared for the large crowds expected to come by train to see Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh. A special train arrived in Mildura on 24-3-1954 with 256 policemen.

Four special trains were scheduled to Sunraysia for the Royal Visit on 25-3-1954.

The first train was scheduled to depart Woomelang at 7.10 a.m; arrive Red Cliffs 10.26 a.m; arrive Mildura 11.35 a.m. There were 500 passengers to Red Cliffs and 270 to Mildura with the train hauled by R758. It was scheduled to depart for Woomelang at 6.25 p.m.
_The second train was scheduled to depart from Donald at 6.20 a.m.; arrive Red Cliffs 11.42 a.m.; arrive Mildura 12.15 p.m. There were 670 passengers to Red Cliffs and 270 to Mildura. It was scheduled to depart at 5.55 p.m._

_The third train was scheduled to depart Pinnaroo at 7.05 a.m; arrive Red Cliffs 12.29 p.m; arrive Mildura 1 p.m. There were 700 passengers to Red Cliffs and 50 to Mildura with the train hauled by R756. It was scheduled to depart at 5.30 p.m._

_ A State train carrying the Premier (Mr. J. Cain) and the Governor (Sir. Dallas Brookes) was scheduled to arrive at 8.45 a.m.. It was scheduled to depart at 11 p.m. carrying the State Members and all police._

The special trains transported a total of 2,238 people, with 1,870 to Red Cliffs and 368 to Mildura.

Two of the locomotives used to haul the special trains for the Royal Visit to Sunraysia. R758 and R756 are shown at the Chaffey Avenue level crossing, Mildura, prior to returning their special trains to Woomelang and Pinnaroo respectively. R756 would have been exchanged for a lighter engine at Ouyen for the journey to Pinnaroo. 25-3-1954. Photo: Bruce McLean Collection

The Victorian Railways at Mildura handled more than 2,000 people on the evening of Friday 21-5-1954 and the morning of Saturday 22-5-1954. Nearly 1,500 were school army cadets leaving and arriving at Mildura and National Service trainees leaving for an annual training camp at Puckapunyal. In a period of 12 hours five trains including
three troop specials were handled at the station. The trains were hauled by B Class
diesel-electric electric locomotives.

Victoria's first Reso train since the war at the last "Reso " train to the north-west of
the State was made during the period 20 - 26 June 1954 when Resonians visited Red
Cliffs, Irymple, Mildura, Merbein, Echuca, Tongala, Tatura, Murchison, Wangaratta,
Alexander and Eildon.

There were 54 primary producers and businessmen on the special train, including 15
graziers from the western district. The Reso train arrived in Mildura on the morning
on Monday 21-6-1954.

The official welcome at Redcliffs by the President of the Shire of Mildura,
Cr. J.R. Gordon, following arrival of the Reso train on 21-6-1954. Note
the presence of the "Norman" car in the background. This special
carriage was usually allocated for use on the Victorian Railways
Commissioners' inspection train. Photo: Bob Whitehead Collection
On arrival at Mildura, the Reso train was stabled on the wharf siding beside the Murray River. Note the proximity of the siding to the river and the sleeping cars off "The Overland" Melbourne to Adelaide overnight express train. The Mayor of the City of Mildura, Cr. R.R. Etherington is officially welcoming the visiting party. 21-6-1954. Photo: Bob Whitehead Collection

1955

Special trains for grape harvest labour were scheduled to arrive in Mildura on 11-2-1955 and 12-2-1955. The first special with 400 New Australian harvest workers was delayed by washaways and the failure of the Staff Exchange instrument at Hattah.

1956

The Vice-Regal carriage was attached to the Mildura passenger train on 22-5-1956 to bring the Governor (Sir Dallas Brookes) and Lady Brooks for a four day visit to Sunraysia. It was stabled on the Mildura wharf line.

1957

The Holiday Train Association ran a special holiday train to Mildura on the Queens Birthday holiday weekend. The train left Melbourne on 14-6-1957 and arrived at 8.00 a.m. the following morning. On board was a party of more than 70 people. The train spent three days at Mildura and was stabled on the wharf siding by the River Murray.
It consisted of four sleeping cars, two lounge cars, two shower cars and a power car. It departed at 9.50 p.m. on 17-6-1957.

Railway staff in the north-west region of the State were medically examined and had their eyes checked by the Victorian Railways medical officer in June 1957. A special Medical and Vision carriage was used for this service

1958

A special train consisting of 12 carriages conveying harvest labour to Sunraysia, arrived at Mildura on 16-2-1958. The train was hauled by the first T Class locomotives to Mildura - T343 and T345.

A special train conveying Wirth's Circus was scheduled to north-west Victoria on the following dates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Locomotive</th>
<th>Driver</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-9-1958</td>
<td>Birchip to Ouyen</td>
<td>N405</td>
<td>Westlake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-9-1958</td>
<td>Ouyen to Mildura</td>
<td>N411</td>
<td>Westlake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-9-1958</td>
<td>Mildura to Merbein</td>
<td>K178</td>
<td>Purcell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-9-1958</td>
<td>Merbein to Redcliffs</td>
<td>K178</td>
<td>Purcell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-9-1958</td>
<td>Redcliffs to Woomelang</td>
<td>K178</td>
<td>Whittaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-9-1958</td>
<td>Woomelang to Donald</td>
<td>K178</td>
<td>Whittaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-9-1958</td>
<td>Donald to Dunolly</td>
<td>N498, K178</td>
<td>Foletti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-9-1958</td>
<td>Dunolly to Maryborough</td>
<td>R742, N498</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1959

Wirth's Circus toured north-west Victoria on the following dates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Locomotive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17-9-1959</td>
<td>Birchip to Ouyen</td>
<td>N424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-9-1959</td>
<td>Ouyen to Mildura</td>
<td>N424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-9-1959</td>
<td>Mildura to Merbein</td>
<td>N418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-9-1959</td>
<td>Merbein to Redcliffs</td>
<td>K190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-9-1959</td>
<td>Redcliffs to Ouyen</td>
<td>N424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-9-1959</td>
<td>Ouyen to Woomelang</td>
<td>N414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-9-1959</td>
<td>Woomelang to Donald</td>
<td>N??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-9-1959</td>
<td>Donald to Dunolly</td>
<td>N424, N414</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Mildura Railway History CD by Bruce McLean Version 1 - 2003
In 1993 the Kennett Government set about removing the use of several passenger trains in Victoria. One of those was Mildura. In 1998 the Red Cliffs Historical Steam Railway commenced its operation as an accredited tourist train with its Lukee Type Skylark engine. This is the only passenger train in operation within several hundred kilometres of Mildura. Will it be the only train in operation for the next 17 years?

109 years old locomotive, Lukee

Only passenger train in Mildura

Photo: Mary Chandler

“Towards an integrated and sustainable transport future: A new legislative framework for transport in Victoria’ Policy Statement July 2009, pages 12 and 13 covers all of the issues that people brought up during the consultation sessions held at Ouyen and Mildura including consideration of the triple bottle line. This consideration must be factored into all projects and is clearly enunciated in policy for the Victorian transport system in the Transport Integration Bill. It can also be found in other Victorian Government policy documents.

“Stakeholders stated that transport must be fit for purpose and that transport needs should be determined before cost effective methods of delivery.

“We really need to look at triple bottom line considerations not just the bottom line in terms of dollars.” (Submission 51)

“Outcomes should be guided by a number of key goals that reflect a triple bottom line approach to managing the wellbeing of Victoria’s rural, regional and metropolitan

3 Lukee photo Ben Piscioneri, Courtesy Mildura Weekly
communities, involving an in-depth and balance examination of social, environmental and economic considerations.” (Submission 33)

The Engineers of Australia Infrastructure Report Card 2010 rated the rail network in Victoria as **D**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rail</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This rating recognises that that there has been no fundamental improvement to the metropolitan rail network since 2005, although there are a number of projects underway that should deliver improvements. Over the long-term, a complete modernisation of metropolitan rail is required to meet the significant increase in demand expected from rising population and public transport use. While important regional rail segments have improved, quality is still below what is needed for rail freight to increase its market share. Less used elements of the regional rail network remain inadequate. The quality of the tram network is improving but is still inadequate in terms of average speed and capacity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is a damning inditement of all rail networks but I am sure if the Mildura line from Maryborough had been singled out it would have been rated **Z** had such a category existed.

The current Feasibility Study into the return of the Mildura Passenger train must realise from the sessions held, particularly at Ouyen and Mildura, that people living in these areas **WANT THEIR PASSENGER TRAIN RETURNED**.

**WHY IT SHOULD BE RETURNED.**

(a) In light of the recent restoration of the line allowing higher train speeds shows that a net journey time of 460 minutes from Melbourne to Mildura appears feasible compared with the 640 minute schedule that applied in 1993. The journey from Mildura to Melbourne appears to be marginally slower due to rail congestion around Melbourne and the increased number of stops that are made but I believe it is feasible to return a passenger train to Mildura. I anticipate that a restored Mildura passenger train would be used both by residents and tourists wishing to visit Mildura.

(b) As an elderly person I know that Mildura is 365 road miles from Melbourne. It is situated in the far north-west corner of Victoria on the border of both New South Wales and South Australia. This means that Mildura has really been isolated over the 17 years it has survived without a passenger train, and it has also suffered a reduction
in rail freight over this time. I read that Mildura is 571 rail kilometres from Melbourne via Ballarat; Ballarat is 199 rail kilometres from Melbourne and the rail distance from Ballarat to Mildura is 452 kilometres. Over the many years I caught the train from Spencer Street to Mildura I was highly amused at the call of “Ballarat and Beyond”.

(c) It would appear that we are still “beyond.” Mildura people vote and pay taxes. It is time the DoT and the Brumby Government started to listen to the community’s wishes. In the State of Victoria it can be said that Mildura is remote and geographically isolated, yet this is one of its greatest appeal to both tourists and also those seeking a change of lifestyle, a ‘seachange’ away from Melbourne.

(d) Mildura is the only large inland regional city without a passenger train. With a regional population of well over 60,000 and a tri-state catchment population of 130,000, being denied a passenger rail service amounts to discrimination.

(e) Mildura has been without a viable mode of transport for 17 years (buses being inadequate for most people as well as deeply unpopular) means that tens of thousands of people have been denied a public transport subsidy, incurring a significant public transport subsidy deficit owed to the region.

(f) The isolated Mildura region’s economy is intrinsically tied to transport - including a significant tourism industry (will come up later) that in turn is vital to the retail and hospitality industries. Research has indicated upward pressures on the cost of fuel in the near future – through both the impost on carbon (CO2e) and the Peak Oil phenomenon. It is essential that the Mildura region must diversity its transport to include passenger rail and also a daily freight train in line with the State Government’s Sustainable Transport policies.

(g) It appears to me that the community sessions including Swan Hill, which is not on the Mildura line, attempted to divide and conquer, setting both communities against each other. This action can only draw criticism, especially as people will still wish to travel to Bendigo by public transport, and therefore Mildura people will still use the Swan Hill route if needed.
(h) Both Swan Hill and Mildura communities are isolated and transport dependent, and Mildura, with its rapidly expanding population growth, should not be discriminated against. I fully believe there is room for both routes and types of transport, and we should share together what is becoming a world trend: the patronage of public transport. Both communities support each other in this respect.

(i) Mildura is and continues to be in the top four localities for growth in the state of Victoria and this trend is projected to continue into the future.

(j) Mildura also has one of the highest per capita building approvals in Victoria, indicating that continued growth in this region for quite some time to come.

**Top 10 Things You Must Know About the Mildura Region**

1. The Mildura region economy generates $2,788 billion in Gross Regional Product (GRP) per annum and is diversified across agriculture/horticulture, advanced manufacturing, logistics and services.
2. Solar Systems (now taken over by another firm) is building the largest solar photovoltaic power station in the world (154 megawatt) in the Mildura region worth $420 million.
3. The Murray Darling and Swan Hill region produces 15% of Australia’s red wine grape crush and 25% of Australia’s white wine grape crush.
4. The Mildura region offers excellent education and training and research and development facilities.
5. The region produces a significant amount of Australia’s fruit, vegetables and nuts, including 98% of all dried fruit, 74% of table grapes and 24% of all citrus.
6. Mildura Airport is the largest and busiest regional airport in Victoria catering for 188,708 passengers per year and offering 70 flights per week.
7. A high quality of life and a low cost of living makes the Mildura region an attractive location to recruit and retain employees.
8. Suitable land and infrastructure exists to provide for future industrial, residential and commercial development.
9. The Mildura region offers cost savings to businesses through low cost of living, affordable land and great infrastructure.
10. Over 300 festivals and events are held within the Mildura region each year.

The population growth, which has been consistent over past decades has generated demand for a variety of products and services, including housing, which has aided a driving a strong economy. The Economic Report has even mooted that Mildura is set to equal Ballarat’s current population in 20 years.

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^ Mildura Development Corporation – Mildura Region Economic Profile 2009
SOCIAL

Whilst many of these people might well be able to afford the anticipated hikes in air transport costs or road transport (by car), an overnight sleeper which incorporates regional food and wine, conference, computer and cinema facilities would be an extremely attractive option: passengers would arrive for breakfast, complete their business and then be able to return the following evening on the train.

Looking into the future they would be able to take an express daytime VFT back to Mildura.

Overseas trains have Business Class, which provides first class standard travel, plus access to phone, fax, computer and conference facilities. Mildura, as a business/conference destination, would be enhanced by the meeting/conference being able to start the night before on the train.

However there is another group in the Mildura community with special needs that would be well served by an affordable, accessible and fast passenger train.

SECTION 2: SOCIAL DISTRESS

FAMILY INCOME

“Low income is interwoven with the influence of other forms of disadvantage. It can be the consequence of factors like mental illness, crime and child maltreatment. Much recent research has emphasised the importance of relative inequality of income and people’s consciousness of their comparative position rather than the direct effects of material standards”2.

The previous social indicators measured low family income at below $600 per week. The present iteration has indexed income against inflation for the five years since 2001 and presents an accurate figure of below $650 per week for the updated social indicators based on the $600 mark. The higher income bracket of $1200 or more per week has risen to $1400.

Again the region’s localities have a higher proportion of families on a low family income compared with Melbourne.

The range between the Melbourne figure and the sub-regions has increased with the introduction of the Mallee Track (20.1% to 38.9% compared with 22% to 35.9% (Wentworth) in 2001). With the exceptions of Irymple and Nangiloc/Colignan, the
rest of the localities were below the rates expressed for 2001 but further from the Regional Victorian figure for low income families. Some family incomes in the Mallee Track (38.9%) and the Milawa (35.4%) exceeded the Regional Victorian figure by quite a high margin. While Mildura’s sub-regions, with the exceptions of Ouyen and Greater Red Cliffs, have experienced a slight increase in the proportion of families who earn a high income as measured here, the figure for regional Victoria and Melbourne has also increased. The proportion of families who earn a high income for the new additions of Mallee Track, Milawa, and Nangiloc/Colignan are generally below the other subregions, somewhat below Regional Victoria and well below Melbourne.

**FIGURE 5: FAMILY INCOMES BY LOCALITIES**

2 Mildura Social Indicators 2006 pg 12

5 13

**DISABILITY/SICKNESS PAYMENT**

This indicator again combines data for disability support pension and sickness allowance as one means of assessing the individual health of residents living in the region’s localities and also the Mildura community’s wellbeing in comparison to Regional Victoria and Melbourne. Briefly, sickness allowance is available to Australian residents (or newly arrived migrants after 104 weeks in Australia) who are temporarily incapacitated for work or full-time study. Recipients must have a job or full-time study to which they can return. A disability support pension is available to Australian residents of ten years standing who are aged 16 years or over. The beneficiaries must have a physical, intellectual or psychiatric impairment assessed at 20 points or more and be unable to work for at least the next two years as a result of impairment and be unable to undertake vocational or educational training that would equip them for work within two years. In both 2006 and 2007, the rates of disability/sickness payments in three of the sub-areas of Mildura fell below that of Regional Victoria, with two slightly exceeding and Mildura RCC almost equaling that of Regional Victoria. This is in contrast to the 2005 figures where four of the sub-area figures fell below the Regional Victoria figure. Notwithstanding, all locations and sub-regions with the exception of Melbourne, have seen a dramatic decrease in figures from 2005. Melbourne in the previous report displayed substantially lower figures than all other locations and sub-areas with the exception of Ouyen, this current report shows Melbourne figures to be once again below all other locations with the exception of Irymple for both years. Nonetheless, caution must be exercised when reviewing the most recent findings expressed below. Due to the issues of privacy, numbers below 20 in some of the smaller postcodes within the raw data were not available and therefore averages were estimated.

**FIGURE 10: DISTRIBUTION OF DISABILITY PENSIONS AND SICKNESS ALLOWANCES - RATES PER 1,000**

Source: Centrelink Unpublished Data, 2008

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6 Latrobe University Mildura social Indicators Report 2008 Community Engagement Framework Researchers: Dr. Hadyn Aarons & Brigette Glossip, Principal Consultant; Professor Tony Vinson AM For MRCC
PENSIONERS, AGED AND DISABLED.

The above report indicates the number of people on lower incomes and also the number of people on disability pensions. Pensioners, the aged (over 65) and the disabled are also a growing group in our community with special needs that would be well served by an affordable passenger train.

Many people in this group find that they are unable to use the current bus/train services or air services. They need access for wheelchairs, gophers, and walking frames. They are unable to access a bus or plane because of the necessity to climb up steps into either of these transport modes.

They need to travel to Melbourne for a variety of reasons: medical, visits to family, shows, shopping and business. They have a need to move around, stretch their legs and get the blood flowing, all of which is difficult if not impossible on a bus.

Currently our senior citizens are faced with two options if they wish to travel by public transport to Melbourne other than by air; a combined bus and trains transfer trip via Swan Hill and Bendigo leaving at 4.05am and arriving at 11.31 am, or a long bus trip via Donald, Maryborough and Ballarat where a change is made to train. Many seniors and even the mildly disabled are unable to access the toilet facilities on bus or plane.

Many have complained of the bus/train option on the Swan Hill Route being virtually impossible because of the need to deal with transfer of luggage between bus and trains without assistance.

For all of these people, direct train travel to Melbourne would afford them some dignity and independence plus safe travel and lack of anxiety over a prolonged period. Some must spent each leg of the Swan Hill route wondering how they will cope when they arrive at Swan Hill, or the next destination.
Over the past 17 years pensioners have missed out on using their free vouchers, which is a sore point with many, as they are unable to travel on the current modes of transport because of the reasons mentioned above.

The return of the passenger train would mean that many who would use it have discounted fares. However there would be many other passengers on each trip who did not fall into these categories, which would help the cost of running the train. I do not believe that running costs should play a part in the return of the train – as long as costs are covered then that is sufficient.

Young families are another group who would use the passenger train if it were returned. They would have access for prams, plus if there is seat that can face both ways to accommodate social interaction and to cater for those who travel best either facing the engine or with their backs to it, the family can sit together and not be split up. The children can move around safely in the carriage and if tables are also provided, could be entertained with games, books and computers.

TOURISM

Already it appears that people world-wide are turning to public transport as fossil fuel prices escalate and the prediction by Sir Richard Branson and others that there will be a Peak Oil crisis within the next five years, reflects the need for the return of the Mildura Passenger train so that Victoria is covered by this crisis. As fuel prices continue to escalate, tourists will increasingly turn to public transport, and a clean, green train that is cheaper than other options, such as air travel or by car will be a winner.

However they will be looking for and up to date, clean, safe train with modern facilities such as a dining car with regional food and wine, conference, computer and cinema facilities, plus even live entertainment on longer trips. These facilities would be a tremendous draw card. Where Mildura is concerned, tourism would be greatly assisted by the rail gauge being standardized, and the line being connected to the national rail network. The Mildura Economic Development Board/Corporation has recommended this connection take place at Sayers Lake near Pooncarie, north-east of
Wentworth. This would open up a whole wide new world in the rest of Australia for Victorians.

Tourism is a major and vibrant industry in Mildura, it plays a vital part in its economy. Any downturn caused by a rise in fuel prices would have a dramatic effect on the industry and Mildura’s economy. It generates more than $210 million in expenditure each year and underpinning around 2,100 full time jobs. The loss of these jobs would have the reaction of a pebble thrown in a pond effect throughout all the hospitality and other industries in Sunraysia.

And - goodness knows how much better it would have been, had we had a passenger train over the past 17 years. How much money has Mildura lost during this time I wonder?

With the prospect of Peak Oil, I believe that the future of tourism in Mildura faces a severe downfall in numbers in the future, if the passenger train is not returned. This will also have a negative affect on Melbourne also. Tourism goes both ways.

(a) Eco-or Green Tourism
Already Europe and in other parts of the world, there is a rapidly growing trend towards green – or eco-tourism. International tourists, as well as Australians, are seeking experiences with this kind of tourism, and Mildura is in an excellent position to take advantage of this. Mildura is the gateway to the outback. It is situated in the corner of Victoria bordering New South Wales and South Australia. This is an enormous plus as it is surrounded by numerous national parks.

Mildura has:
(1) The fabulous Murray River. Tourists and locals alike enjoy camping, kyacking, swimming, fishing, boating and photography. The Murray is the playground to people of all persuasions and for 12 months of the year is in constant use. People can relax and switch off on the many luxurious houseboats for hire, take a ride on a pleasure vessel or be part of the thousands of people attracted to the several water events held during the year.
Mildura is surrounded by National Parks - world-heritage renowned Mungo, Hattah/Kulkyne, Murray/Sunset, Pink Lakes, Kings Billabong Wildlife Reserve and the newly created Murray River National Parks.

Mungo National Park, over the border in New South Wales, is well known for its indigenous history with the discovery of Mungo Man and Mungo Woman, as well as being a photographer’s paradise.

The Victorian National Parks and Wildlife reserves contain more than a million hectares of land and adjoin similar areas in South Australia and New South Wales. The history of our indigenous peoples can be witnessed by the many canoe trees, shell middens, hearths and burials. There is a wealth of cultural history from white settlement days also. These Parks caters for bush walking, camping, photography, bird watching, field naturalists, swimming, picnicking and there are many scenic drives. It offers tourists the opportunity to experience life in bush settings, where there is time to breathe the air, study the stars and take time out from the modern world.

**EVENTS AND CULTURAL TOURISM**

(1) Mildura’s tourist appeal is greatly enhanced by its full calendar of festivals and events throughout the year - over 300. These include the Murray River International Festival, Mildura Arts’ Festival, Country Music Festival, Mildura Writers’ festival, Opera at the Lock, Milldura Wine and Jazz Festival, Mardi Gras, Lunafest, Mildura Grand Tennis International (Mildura hosted the David Cup in 1998 and the Federation Cup in 2009), Mildura Masters Games, Golf Week, Motor Sports and the Great Australian Vanilla Slice Triumph.

(2) One way of enticing passenger onto a train in the early days would be by promoting a great railway journeys’ theme. You will already have noted on prior pages Bruce McLean’s material, that Mildura was involved with many theme train packages over the years, and that they were very successful. There are a huge number of events that could be marketed as a weekend package.
(3) The conference and business events market is another growing segment within the local tourism industry. Up to 2008 Mildura was hosting approximately 25 conferences a year, and this is expanding.

(4) Mildura has an abundance of local wineries, quality restaurants which market the magnitude of locally-grown produce including Stefano’s, Trentham Estate Wineries and so much more. Eating out in Mildura is a culinary experience not to be missed.

(5) Mildura has a unique history. It was Australia’s first irrigation colony. This is displayed along the Chaffey Trail which enables visitors to follow the Chaffey Brothers 1888 vision. This trail has been developed over the years and includes the Chaffey Graves, Rio Vista Homestead, Old Mildura, Homestead, Mildura Wharf, Psyche Pumping Station and other sites of pertaining to the Chaffeys.

(6) The town of Wentworth with its historic Port, church buildings, court house and the junction of the two rivers is part of the district history. The old Paddle Steamer Melbourne and Mundoo and Paddle Vessel Rothbury are also of great interest to history buffs.

(7) There are two World War One Soldier Settlements, Birdwoodton and Red Cliffs. The Red Cliffs Soldier settlement was founded after World War 1, the first allocation of blocks taking place in 1921. Many of the original buildings are standing today, but used for a different purpose: the Court House is a museum and headquarters of the Red Cliffs & District Historical; the State Savings Bank of Victoria, Bank of New South Wales and Commercial Bank of Australia are all private home. Diggerland, the meeting place of those early settlers is a church, the State River & Water Supply Offices are a private home, the old Fire Station is a Coffee House, a Turkish 75mm gun stand proudly beside the R.S.L. building in Jamieson Avenue and a German 8.2 Howitzer takes pride of place in Barclay Square.
Waiting for the train that never comes.

The Red Cliffs, after which the town is named, are approximately four kilometers out Town and a popular place for tourists to visit.

(8) The Red Cliffs Historical Steam Railway which came to Mildura on the PS Renmark in 1924 operated from the Red Cliffs Railway Siding out to the Red Cliffs Pumping Station carting briquettes until 1953. Today it operates as a tourist train from its own Karadoc Station 2 kilometres south of Red Cliffs.

BABY-BOOMER/GREY TOURISM
In an age bracket 45-62, people in this group are either in retirement or about to retire. Highly educated, wealthy, driven by lifestyle issues such as sea-change, arts and culture, food and wine, history and heritage, they are about to hit either a sea-change or tourism full on. Many are inclined towards green (rail) tourism.

PINK DOLLAR
Mildura’s cultural lifestyle and food based tourism attracts this cashed-up, time and leisure rich, child-free community. They would certainly be drawn towards train travel.
WEATHER AND CLIMATE CHANGE
The Riviera Climate that Mildura is so famous for is a tremendous draw-card both to national and international tourists. It entices tourists made up of families, singles, couples to seniors, all of whom would be attracted to use a passenger train with attached carriages to carry cars. People not already drawn to train travel, will find themselves in the loop as fuel prices rise. Mildura is mooted to become Victoria’s ‘Solar City’, and this will be a future draw-card for many people.

CASINO
If the proposed Casino is built, the comfort of train travel will draw those who want to spend a country weekend in Mildura. Mildura station precinct must be centrally located when redevelopment takes place. It needs to be within walking distance of the Casino, Grand Hotel, many motels and restaurants, city shopping center and the Murray River.

YOUTH MARKET - STUDENTS AND BACKPACKERS
Young travelers wanting to commute between Melbourne and Mildura (or in the opposite direction) represent a growing market for rail transport, one that will expand as fuel costs escalate. Many have indicated that they would like to take their bikes or scooters with them because they use them a lot. This is not possible on a bus, so both Melbourne and Mildura are missing out on this expanding market. Backpackers form the backbone of the current labour markets in Sunraysia and they are more than likely to travel by rail. At this time many of these people are locked out of opportunities to work in the area, prevented by lack of cheap, public transport. Those who come from countries where public transport is efficient, frequent and inexpensive, must wonder if Australia, and in this case Victoria, will ever catch up with the rest of the world.

Students are a group of commuters who have been widely overlooked during these feasibility studies. Issues were brought up in Ouyen briefly. Many local students travel to Ballarat, Geelong and Melbourne for secondary schooling and later on to University. Difficulties in returning home to Ouyen for a weekend were raised and the same conditions apply to Mildura. Many parents are forced to drive their children by car, or in the case of Melbourne, they use the plane if they can afford it. However,
once again with fuel prices predicted to rise, students would readily use a direct train service rather than spend six or more hours driving up/down between Melbourne and Mildura.

Our local school children have missed out on almost two decades of train travel. Local schools used to run excursions by rail to Melbourne so that they could have the opportunity to experience the many educational advantages city children have., visit the planetarium, the museum, zoo, botanical gardens, art galleries, concerts, things that are not available in Mildura. These trips were so important to addressing Mildura’s comparative isolation and once were, and could again be cheaper, safer and more frequent by train. At the current time excursions have been cut back. It costs $5000.00 or more to hire a bus, and parents have to find the money to pay for bus hire, which to many is not possible.

The same applies to Melbourne schools. Many schools used to run excursions to Hattah/Kulkyne National Park and to Mildura itself. The children would hike from the Hattah station to the Park and spend an interesting and informative week in the Park. Today, if they come at all, they also must hire a bus and only the wealthier schools can afford to do this.

GLOBAL WARMING AND SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC TRANSPORT.

According to Sinclair Knight Merz (2009) transport is a significant sector of greenhouse gas emissions in Victoria and can be offset by a shift towards public transport:

The transport sector in Victoria is a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions. Growing demand for transport, driven by population and economic growth, can be offset by a range of approaches – including travel demand programs, **mode shift away from private transport**, improved fuel and vehicle efficiency, increased vehicle occupancy and efficient urban design.

This is further demonstrated by the following Department of Climate Change graphs;
Victoria’s greenhouse gas emissions by sector


Victoria’s greenhouse gas emissions by mode of transport

The need to for a modal shift away from private transport is also reflected in the unsustainable road and air transport emissions trends indicated in the Australian Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics table below.

**Transport direct greenhouse gas (carbon dioxide equivalent) emissions, by transport mode** (*In gigagrams of CO₂-equivalent*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial year</th>
<th>Motor Vehicles</th>
<th>Rail (non–electric)</th>
<th>Maritime</th>
<th>Aviation</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989–90 783</td>
<td>53 184</td>
<td>1 741</td>
<td>2 294</td>
<td>2 564</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990–91 929</td>
<td>52 905</td>
<td>1 732</td>
<td>2 152</td>
<td>3 140</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991–92 557</td>
<td>53 280</td>
<td>1 685</td>
<td>2 201</td>
<td>3 392</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992–93 984</td>
<td>54 578</td>
<td>1 658</td>
<td>2 196</td>
<td>3 552</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993–94 450</td>
<td>55 713</td>
<td>1 792</td>
<td>2 240</td>
<td>3 706</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994–95 643</td>
<td>58 156</td>
<td>1 743</td>
<td>2 471</td>
<td>4 273</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995–96 351</td>
<td>59 744</td>
<td>1 696</td>
<td>2 273</td>
<td>4 638</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996–97 255</td>
<td>60 424</td>
<td>1 729</td>
<td>2 265</td>
<td>4 837</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997–98 917</td>
<td>62 045</td>
<td>1 757</td>
<td>2 269</td>
<td>4 845</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998–99 531</td>
<td>63 812</td>
<td>1 808</td>
<td>2 131</td>
<td>4 780</td>
<td>72</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999–00 274</td>
<td>65 286</td>
<td>1 874</td>
<td>2 116</td>
<td>4 998</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000–01 587</td>
<td>65 591</td>
<td>1 840</td>
<td>2 021</td>
<td>5 135</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001–02 215</td>
<td>68 484</td>
<td>1 926</td>
<td>2 079</td>
<td>4 725</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002–03 813</td>
<td>69 742</td>
<td>1 977</td>
<td>2 056</td>
<td>5 039</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003–04 841</td>
<td>73 189</td>
<td>2 016</td>
<td>2 054</td>
<td>5 581</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The ascendency of rail will be driven by escalating fuel prices, brought about by two main factors: global warming and the associated tax on the highest polluting modes of transport, and Peak Oil – where demand for fossil fuels outstrips supply. Any feasibility study needs to take these factors into account. They will significantly impact the local economy, making private transport (road and particularly air) unaffordable. Mildura must future-proof itself by establishing a rail lifeline for both
passengers and freight. Combined into a package, a rail-based public transport and freight system will provide Mildura with economic certainty into the future.

MILDURA’S CARBON FOOTPRINT

There is very little heavy industry run in Mildura so air and road transport emissions would be a substantial proportion of Mildura’s carbon footprint. Mildura, the same as everywhere else, is obliged to reduce its carbon footprint. The number of transports, B-doubles and cars currently travelling along the Calder and Henty Highways must be reduced to a minimum.

According to its website the Mildura Airport sees over 80 flights a week into and out of Mildura dumping unquantifiable loads (but significant even on a per passenger ratio) of CO2 directly into the upper atmosphere.

Daily flights to Melbourne include 3 x Qantas trips (averaged) with 50 seats, 3 x Rex flights with 34 seats and 1 x Virgin Blue flight with 78/104 seats.

This (and road transport emissions) should be quantified, as rail is 75-90% lower (or up to 10 times better) in carbon emissions per passenger km than air.

If the Government is serious about reducing Victoria’s carbon footprint, then rail transport state-wide, containing both freight and passenger rail must be the way to go into the future. In fact it will become vital for future carbon trading. Rail will need to convert to bio-fuel diesel. It is irresponsible to encourage greater use of truck, B-doubles, Tri-doubles, buses and planes, when a rail alternative is a better green attractive alternative. Surely this will be a vote winner with people as well as being a great contribution towards saving our Planet from the escalating rise in Global Warming.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND RAIL FREIGHT

The Victorian Government has been forced to buy back the Melbourne-Mildura line due to lessees, Pacific National, allowing the line to seriously deteriorate. This is
more than adequately addressed in the Victoria Auditor-General’s Report - Maintaining Victoria’s Rail Infrastructure Assets, May 2007. The Government should continue to be responsible for its upgrade and standardization, connection to the national network, and its on-going maintenance and condition. This would then allow the Government to lease the track to private operators for either or both freight and passenger services. The rail transport view must include the dual requirements of freight/passenger transport in aspects such as rail speeds, cornering to be able to take higher speeds, signaling, axle loads and double stacking (including passengers).

Standardization and connecting the rail to the national network must be done to a VFT standard to allow full utilization and therefore long-term network viability – for both freight and passenger services.

A state-of-the-art rail network connected to the national network will ensure competitive leasing to private providers, make usage more attractive and promote Victoria as a green transport state.

The history of the three state cluster plan is set out below:

**Three State Cluster Plan**

Government representatives from three states - Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia - agreed to the first step in establishing a multi-modal transport hub in the region surrounding Mildura. The meeting was arranged with the Sunraysia Mallee Economic Development Board and discussed policies, regulations and rules and is aiming to bring cross-border barriers down. Dr. P. Crawley, Development Board Chief Executive Officer, said there was consensus among participants for the Ouyen - Pinnaroo - Adelaide rail line to become a major arterial rail line but the Victorian side required standard gauge conversion and upgrading and the South Australian government prepared to convert the 5.6km gap between the border and Pinnaroo.

Dr. Crawley also addressed a Mildura Freight Forum on 17-7-2003 advocating a national rail link from Melbourne to Darwin, passing through Mildura. Dr. Crawley said the "National Inland Rail Link" proposed by the Sunraysia Mallee Economic Development Board included an upgrade and realignment of the track around Mildura and a new line from Mildura to Darnick and would cost $450 million. This compared with other proposed lines as follows:

* Melbourne-Sydney-Brisbane-Mt.Isa-Darwin, $1.7 billion;
* Melbourne-Parkes-Mt.Isa-Darwin, $1.2 billion.
Dr. Crawley described the proposal as "a Melbourne to Darwin line via Sunraysia overlaying the Tri-State macro cluster". He claimed it worked well with plans for a multi-modal hub at Mildura linking road, rail and air freight and passenger services and would provide a base for creating economies of scale and therefore the best rates for producers and manufacturers to export to Asia.7

The Mildura regions is strategically located at the junction of three states, which means it is already connected to the rest of Australia through major road and air infrastructure and to a less degree, rail. At the present time Mildura is the end of the rail line from Melbourne. It is vital that this line is continued on to connect to the national rail network at Sayers Lake near Pooncarie, north east of Wentworth to connect up to the Sydney to Perth rail system. This connection would also enable extensive mineral sands deposits in the Sayers Lake vicinity to be transported south through Victoria. Creating a truly Australia-wide rail network would mean that both freight and passengers could travel from Mildura to Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth or Darwin. Passengers needs must be seen in tandem with rail freight needs and as agriculture production and manufactured goods of all kinds continue to expand, so does the transportation and distribution industry and the networks that take products to market need to expand. Mildura must not continue to be excluded from a vital Australia-wide rail network. The most recent indicator is to be found in the annual Plan 2007-8, Victoria Auditor-General’s office P. 23, Figure 2B, 2009-10.

The freight rail service to Melbourne currently operates three times per week – it use to operate at last once daily in the past. Now that the track structure has been upgraded to 1993 level to create a faster more reliable rail link to Melbourne, freight trains can run at a speed of up to 80 km/h, reducing travel time from 14 hours to 10 hours. I have been told that it would be feasible for a passenger train to travel at a faster speed than 80 km/h. The up-grade has factored in the future conversion of the track to standard gauge. All that is required now is to complete the conversion of the track to standard gauge.

7 Mildura Railway History CD by Bruce McLean Version 1- 2003
The current MRCC consultants’ study is intended to involve the removal of the freight centre from the City of Mildura. Mention has been made of Thurla and maybe a new spur line for freight could run through Thurla. The Red Cliffs Historical Steam Railway is situated at the corner of the Werrimull road/Rail crossing. A huge number of B-doubles use this crossing and when they stop at the Calder Highway stop sign, frequently part of the body of the B-double is over the Mildura/Melbourne railway line. There has already been an accident at this crossing.

Train accident at Werrimull Rd Crossing when a wine tanker collided with the train. If a spur line leaves from this crossing then lights must be added for safety reasons. Hopefully though, it will mean the removal of many of the B-doubles using this dangerous crossing.

It is sensible to remove the freight terminal from the centre of Mildura to Merbein, but the passenger rail terminal must remain in the centre of the City.

I would like to end by quoting from “The Age” March 13, 2010, ‘Power but little glory in polluted politics by Tony Fitzgerald who presided over the Fitzgerald Inquiry.

“We look to our MP’s for leadership. Instead we get political game-playing. Because all parties grasp opportunities when in power, opposition criticism of government self-indulgence is generally muted and the risk of an electoral backlash is low.
These short-term political practices and tactics risk serious social problems. Public figures are role models and their standards percolate into the community. Social capital and social cohesion built on integrity and trust are easily dissipated as the population increases, communities become larger and more diverse and economic disparities widen. PEOPLE WHO CONSIDER THEMSELVES POWERLESS OUTSIDERS READILY BECOME DISILLUSIONED, CYNICAL, APATHETIC AND DISENGAGED AND LOSE TRUST IN GOVERNMENT, THE INTEGRITY OF ITS PROCESS AND DECISIONS AND EVEN FUNDAMENTAL INSTITUTIONS. PRINCIPLED LEADERSHIP IS ESSENTIAL TO PRESERVE OUR CONFIDENCE IN AND SUPPORT FOR EACH OTHER

CONCLUSION

I believe it is entirely feasible that the passenger train should be returned to Mildura and I hope I have managed to produce enough evidence to convince the panel to this end. The predicted escalation of energy costs (carbon tax and Peak Oil) make it an economic imperative for the geographically isolated cross-border region known as Sunraysia to have direct rail connectivity to Melbourne, and, through the standardisation of the line, to the National Australian Rail Network. This area’s growth momentum indicates it has already become a unique – and seemingly unstoppable – tri-state commercial hub that will guarantee the commercial viability of the return of the Mildura Passenger Train.

It would be good to see Victoria as a leader with regard to environmental concerns and initiatives. Too often it opts for quick-fix measures, which means double handling, escalating costs and an important rural area cut off from the rest of Victoria and Australia because the line has not been standardized.

Both freight and passengers should be able to be carted at a reasonable cost, speed, safety and environmentally friendly method all over Victoria and Australia. It is neither prudent nor wise to have a double-handled freight or passenger train because of differing gauge sizes and Mildura must be given the same opportunity as other cities.

Our past sitting member, Mr. Russell Savage helped the Labor government into power on the belief that the passenger rail would be returned to Mildura. He left this regional a bitter man, and a date for the return of the passenger rail has still not been given.
Regional rail services have undergone a renaissance and are booming with recent growth in passenger numbers the greatest in 60 years. The Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and Traralgon lines have all had growth of more than 18 per cent numbers in the 12 months to March 2009. For three years in a row patronage across V/line services has grown by more than 15 per cent a year.

Vline spokesman Daniel Moloney said the first big increases were detected when fares were cut by 20 per cent on average on regional services in March 2007. “We saw our first spike in patronage then, when people saw the trains were a lot cheaper than driving,” he said.

Public Transport Minister Lynne Kosky told The Age the regional rail services have “not only been incredible success for public transport, it has actually helped with the growth of the regions - given people a whole lot of choices about where they live and work.”

Imagine what might have occurred in Mildura had it had a rail service - tourism and local patronage would have grown 18 per cent had it also been given the opportunity of passenger rail travel. So far it has been denied a bright and prosperous future - the right of all Victorians.

The Government has spent money on disasters such as MyKey, Smart Meters, the Big Wheel, The North-South Pipeline and the Desalination Plant. These were paid for by taxes from the whole of Victoria, not just Metropolis. The community is ill-served by this in Melbourne or specific rural areas. These projects could have funded the Mildura Railway line to standardisation, to link up with New South Wales and to have done all the necessary upgrading and bought infrastructure for a passenger train many times over.

I urge the panel to take a visionary look at the long-term logical and practical solution for the Mildura-Melbourne passenger/freight rail services. This means rail standardization, dual freight passenger trains, signalling systems installed, corners configures for VFT’s (Very Fast Trains) and the line connected to the national network. Although this will be a huge cost in the short term, in the long term it will

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8 Age Article by Jason Dowling and Natalie Puchalski, June 6, 2009.
more than pay for itself. People are looking for a “green” rail transport to radically alleviate the huge unsustainable growth of road transport today.

Mildura stands to love most of its $210 million per annum tourism expenditure when there is a dramatic downturn in this industry due to rise in fuel prices.

To quote further from Tony Fitzgerald, The Age, March 13, 2010:

“The community is ill-served by this growing transfer of power from the public to the dominant political parties and the parties’ disinterest in ethical constraints and resistance to oversight and accountability, even by independent anti-corruption bodies. Without satisfactory legal and ethical fetters, the political process, like all human constructs, can be, and is, manipulated and exploited to advance person and group interests”

At the Swan Hill Session I raised the following questions:

Is and when will the Minister for Public Transport release terms of reference for the Mildura Passenger Train Feasibility Study to the public? It is very difficult to write a submission without terms of reference. It appears to many of us to be another Madden Windsorgate. It lacks transparency and is just another piece of Government spin.

I received a reply finally at one of the other sessions. An article appeared in the paper several months ago and the terms of reference were available from the web page listed. I did not see this article in the first place, and secondly, many people do not have access or are unable to use the web. Some cannot afford computers and many, particularly the elderly, cannot use computers. The terms should have been made available for those requiring them in a hard copy. This is discrimination once again.

What studies are being conducted? Will extensive studies be conducted into the economics of returning the passenger train and equally as important, will extensive studies be conducted into NOT RETURNING the passenger train to Mildura? E.g. Social justice, cost to future tourism to name a couple of issues.
Will a draft report of the feasibility study be released to the general public? Will we be able to reply to this draft report which is the normal process or has the Government already made up its mind and these sessions are only another Madden Windsorgate?

To this date I have not received a reply to these questions.

One final question: Will all submissions go on line, and will we be advised how many submissions over all were received?

The pendulum is swinging the other way all over the world including Australia, and passenger rail transport is experiencing a rapid growth in patronage. Natural Justice means that Sunraysia should not be denied a passenger train.

I do not expect that the passenger train will be and can be returned to Mildura in the immediate future. But I, like most people in Sunraysia, would like to see work begin on sections up from Maryborough with a night train travelling in both directions and Friday and Sunday and the gradual introduction of further night and day services over time. I am sure the weekend night service could be up and running within 12 months, and the rest, well………

Our tourist train is appreciated but please return our Mildura passenger train!