

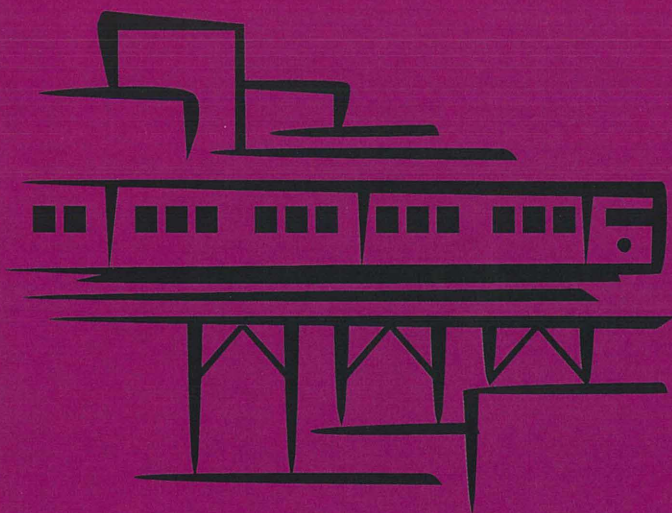
INQUIRY INTO INTER-REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Organisation: Rail Action Bathurst
Name: Mr John Hollis
Position: Chair
Date Received: 18/05/2012

PRESENTATION

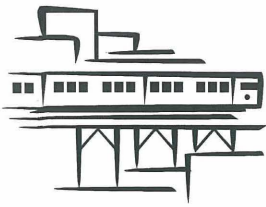
to

**MR ANDREW GEE, MP
MEMBER FOR
ORANGE**



**By Rail Action Bathurst
14 May 2012**

**Daily Return
Rail Service
between
Sydney and Bathurst
(and the Central West)**



Rail Action Bathurst

Preamble

Equity of Access is the prime factor to initially focus on when planning for a fully integrated, quality and user friendly rail service to regional communities. Along with this follows the Budgetary, Utilisation and Strategy Factors. The Bathurst Community for many years has been lobbying for a well integrated, quality and accessible transport infrastructure. To an extent, as far as Air and Coach services are concerned, this has largely been achieved. However, the prime infrastructure networks of benchmark Road and Rail networks are substandard to facilitate the needs of the rapidly growing region of Bathurst and likewise the similarly developing regions of Orange and Dubbo.

Through Rail Action Bathurst (RAB) over the last 15+ years there has been lobbying for the implementation of a CityRail Express Daily return rail service Bathurst to Sydney. The provision of this service will ultimately open up more streamlined and inter- regional rail links for Orange and Dubbo.

The Bathurst Region is the point to start redevelopment of Rail Infrastructure for the Central West Region. Consider the following core reasons:-

- ⇒ Bathurst is one of the Nation's fastest growing regional centres
- ⇒ Bathurst is within the CityRail ticketing network
- ⇒ Bathurst has a population of 40,187 (ABS 30 June 2011). Population forecasts predict the region to grow by 30% to 51,500 by the year 2031.
- ⇒ There is a double rail line to Bathurst.
- ⇒ Age structure with over 50% of the population in the 18 to 64 age group
- ⇒ Bathurst is a key industry centre in the Central NSW region, generating a Gross Regional Product of approximately \$1.4 billion and accounting for more than 20% of the Central NSW regions gross regional product in 2008/2009.
- ⇒ The economy of Bathurst has an even distribution across four main industry sectors of retail, education, health and manufacturing
- ⇒ The Supercheap Auto Bathurst 1000 provides significant Tourism expenditure to the region - \$63 million over a four day period and attracting over 183,000 visitors.
- ⇒ With four major events being held annually and localized events, it is estimated Mount Panorama injects over \$168 million into the Bathurst economy and \$75 million into the NSW gross state product.
- ⇒ Along with rail freight considerations improved passenger services provide the economic catalyst for the upgrade and realignment for the western line.

Countrylink versus CityRail

There is often the comment that 'the XPT timetable should be reversed'. The role of the Dubbo XPT should not be lost to the need for Bathurst to have a daily return Cityrail Service to Sydney. The core reason for the XPT timetable is to provide a well structured rail connection for western towns such as Cobar and Bourke, and all towns in between, with Sydney. Also it is important to note the cost of a CityRail connection Bathurst to

Sydney is approximately \$8.00 as compared with approximately \$35.00 for the same journey on the XPT.

Rail Action Bathurst Campaign

The Rail Action Bathurst group conducted a survey in August/September 2009 to assess the community's desire in lobbying the State Government for the provision of a daily return CityRail service from Bathurst to Sydney. Likewise in February 2010 the Bathurst Regional Council community Survey highlighted the need for better rail service to Sydney. In the Bathurst Regional Council "Economic Development Strategy Paper" one of the key Infrastructure links targeted for improvement is rail.

In January 2008 RAB compiled a Community Petition where 8000 signatures were recorded in support of an improved train service to Sydney. This petition was ultimately tabled in State Parliament by the then Member.

The objective of RAB is to bring to the notice of the NSW State Government the dissatisfaction of the Bathurst Community with a totally inadequate rail service from Bathurst and to provide a daily return service.

This train would:-

- ☐ *Be a direct service from Bathurst to Sydney and return daily*
- ☐ *Be an additional service to all current existing services*
- ☐ *Depart Bathurst 6.00-6.30am arriving Sydney 9.00-9.30am*
- ☐ *Return departing Sydney 5.00-5.30pm arriving Bathurst 8.00-8.30pm*
- ☐ *Have a maximum of 6 stops.*

Survey Results

The survey results are summarised by the accompanying graphs which show that only 33.7% of travellers used the existing rail services because of the Coach/Train transfer at Lithgow, the timetable, the Travel time and the unsatisfactory booking process.

Summary

The NSW Government cannot overlook that the Bathurst Region is ready for the provision of a CityRail commuter train link to Sydney. Whereas short term this decision has uncertain economic justification, however, taking into consideration the long term development and growth of the Region and beyond to Dubbo now is the time to start the investment. It is difficult to ignore the outcomes from Victoria V/Line reintroduction of Regional Train Services where Regional areas are experiencing unprecedented growth.

To quote a recent Victorian Transport Minister " Our investment into regional rail has paid off and now we are taking the necessary steps to ensure the network can grow by adding more tracks and carriages to run more carriages to run more train services".

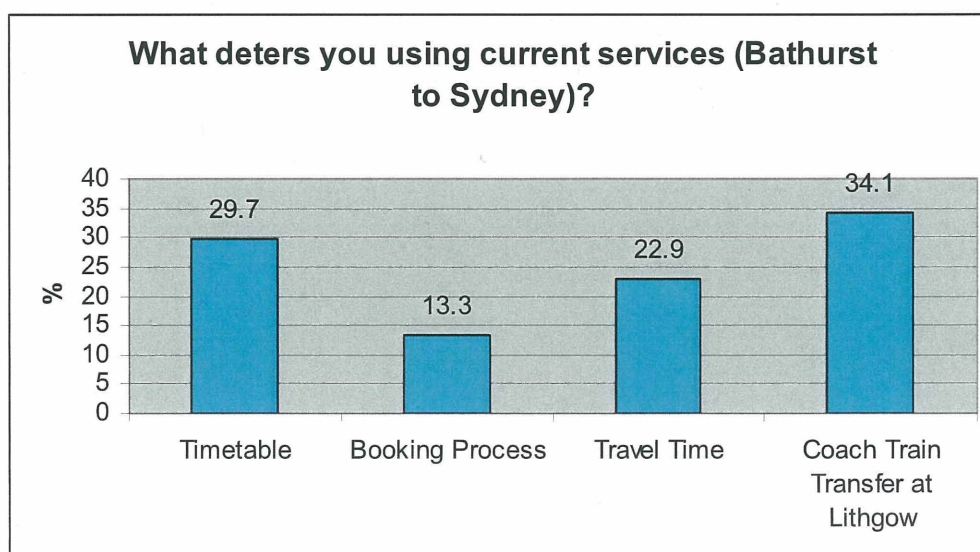
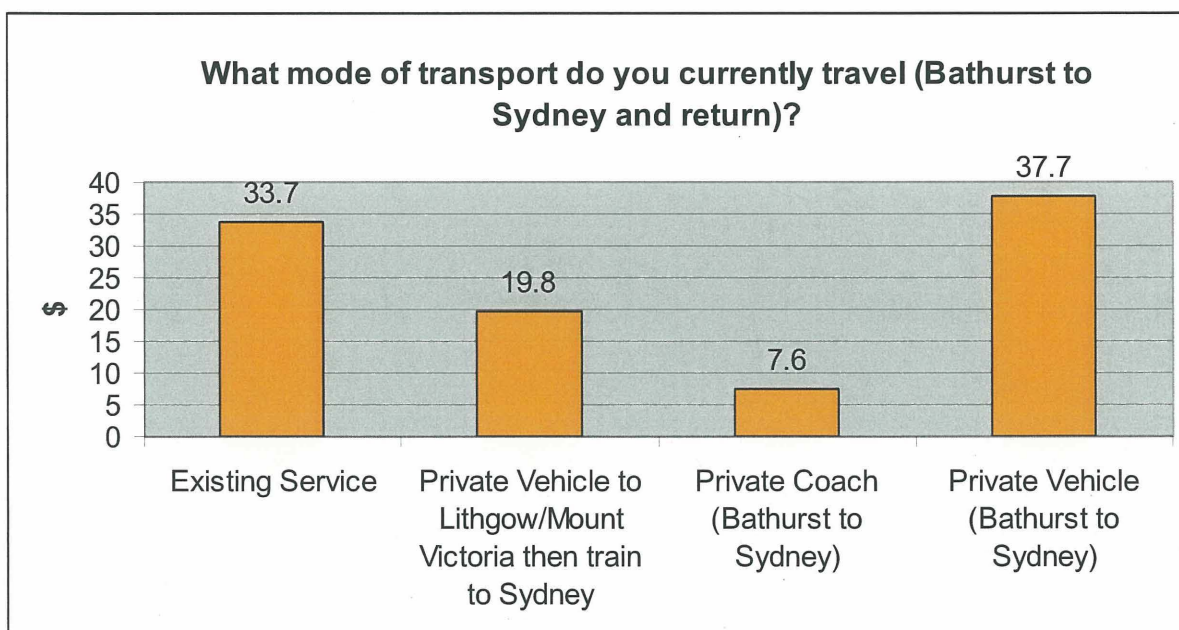
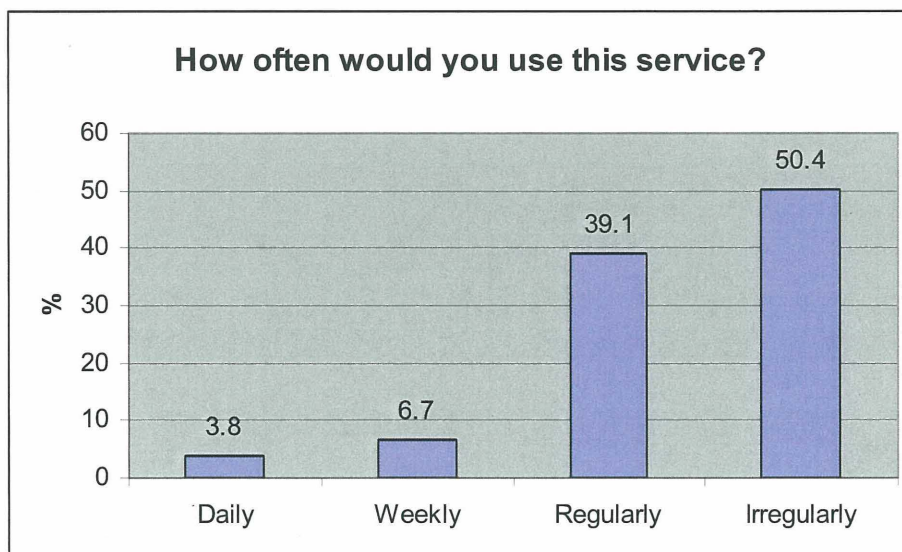
Attachments

1. Graph summarising RAB Community Survey Results
2. Three unsolicited letters from members of the Bathurst Community to illustrate the sentiment of the community
3. Statistical information re V/Line

**GRAPHS SUMMARISING RAB COMMUNITY SURVEY
RESULTS**

SURVEY RESULTS

1,830 people undertook the survey with the following results:



**THREE UNSOLICITED LETTERS FROM MEMBERS OF
THE BATHURST COMMUNITY TO ILLUSTRATE THE
SENTIMENT OF THE COMMUNITY**

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Mr Paul Toole
Member for Bathurst
NSW Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Paul

Firstly, allow me to congratulate you on your election to state parliament. It is good to know that with your participation in government there is a greater rural voice at the state level.

It is with that in mind that I wish to raise an issue which has been ongoing for a long time in our region - that of the train service between Bathurst and Sydney, specifically the current XPT and Explorer services. I am a frequent traveller between Bathurst and Sydney requiring connection to the Central Coast and Newcastle. Most of my travel is by train.

Essentially, the problem is that the current Dubbo XPT and Broken Hill Outback Explorer timetables do not reflect the needs of passengers living in the Bathurst region. For example, regional passengers have to board the XPT train late in the afternoon at Bathurst, arriving in Sydney at approximately 8.49 pm. This is ludicrous as most people are travelling to Sydney to attend appointments, connect to other transport services, conduct business etc. To do so means that people have to stay overnight in Sydney which is costly and inconvenient. Likewise, the timetable from Sydney to Bathurst means that people are required to stay another night in Sydney as this service leaves early in the morning. The same situation applies to the Broken Hill Outback Explorer as this timetable synchronizes closely to that of the XPT.

It seems that for years now, people using these services have made numerous requests to government and demonstrated their desire to have a train timetable that provides access to Sydney at a time that enables people to meet commitments during business and daylight hours. To date, there has been no

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change to meet this demand and no adequate explanations given for the status quo. Surely, it is time to review this situation with the aim of working out how regional travellers can be better served by these two services. Furthermore, there are other concerns which are related to this issue. They relate to the need for a service that provides a single journey without the need to change trains/coaches.

I have been travelling on the XPT and the Inter Urban CityRail services between Sydney and Lithgow for over 6 years on a consistent basis. During that time I have noticed a significant increase in the number of passengers with luggage that requires appropriate space. I myself carry at least 1 medium sized suitcase and some hand luggage on each trip. I have also noticed an increase in the number of older passengers with luggage. The inconvenience and additional costs associated with the XPT and Explorer services' timetables means that:

- Many people are forced to travel by Countrylink coach to Lithgow and then change to a train. This is a very difficult experience for those who have luggage, especially older people. In the first place one has to wait out in the weather to collect one's luggage from the coach, and if waiting for the train, access the small waiting room at the top of Lithgow station, which is not adequate when weather conditions are problematic or wait on the platform which is open to the weather.
- The toilet facilities at Lithgow station are shameful in that they are not adequate for the number of passengers arriving at Lithgow from regional areas and the amenities are overdue for upgrade with regard to modernization and to meet special needs such as wheelchair access.
- The cityrail trains are not designed for heavy luggage and have virtually no space for storage and extremely limited space for seating at the entry level in each carriage. This means that one has to carry luggage upstairs or downstairs in the carriage. Furthermore, having to store luggage on seats or in the aisles is a nuisance to passengers generally.

I have spoken to many people about the train services in question and all have indicated they are disinclined to use the rail services for the above reasons, in particular that one cannot get on a train in Bathurst and go directly to Sydney, arrive in the morning and return on the same service, arriving in Bathurst in the afternoon. The current situation is arcane, outdated and serves no one in regional areas. I believe many more people would access a rail service if it actually served their needs - the current XPT and Explorer timetables do not. Given that these services will continue into the future, surely they can at least operate to the benefit of the clientele they are designed to assist. The new state government has an ideal opportunity here to correct the situation, especially since there is no real determination on any development of a motorway across the mountains. Also, regional councils across the central and western areas of NSW, including Bathurst and Orange are actively involved in the Eco Cities program which aims to encourage people to move into these regions from the urban and metropolitan

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areas of Sydney. The current rail services do not support this initiative, and in fact contradict the suggestion that our regional areas are within easy reach of Sydney. I do not consider that any of our current rail services and infrastructure are world standard with regard to ease of access, appropriate timetabling, good standards of amenities and comfortable, safe travel.

I therefore ask you as the local member with a real voice in parliament to address the issues I have raised above with a view to achieving a better rail service across the board with particular attention to the timetabling of the Central and Western XPT and Explorer services.

I look forward to your reply and thank you in anticipation of a progressive outcome.

Yours faithfully

Lyn Crofts

2 July 2011

20 March 2012

John Hollis
Chairperson Rail Action Bathurst

Dear John,

On Friday 2nd March 2012, having just arrived at Mascot airport, after overnight connecting flights from Beijing to Hong Kong, & Hong Kong to Sydney, my wife & I boarded the 12.10 pm country link train to Lithgow, which was to be met by the Dubbo coach, to continue our journey to Bathurst. However, just after midday, it was announced, that there would be no coach to meet this train at Lithgow, as the highway between Bathurst & Lithgow was closed to flood water; we would have to make alternative arrangements! We arrived at Lithgow just after 3.00pm, to utter turmoil, as apart from ourselves, there were other passengers en route to Orange & Dubbo with no means of transport, to continue their journey. Apart from there being Asian tourists in our group, one passenger had just flown out from England, wanting to go to Orange, & he was utterly confused & concerned as to how he was expected to reach his destination with no alternative arrangements being in place. "Welcome to Australia".

Although a Country Link coach was waiting at the Lithgow Railway station, we were told this was not available to us, as it was already pre booked by those on later trains & would not be departing until 5.30pm anyway. After a lot more irate discussion with the authorities, we were eventually informed, that a two carriage diesel train was being sent from Sydney, & would be expected to arrive sometime around 5.30pm & if we so wished, this would take us all to Bathurst. This was little help to those needing to travel further west! What a disgraceful predicament to find ourselves; the authorities had two hours to make alternative travel arrangements for their passengers, & apparently did nothing to alleviate the situation. Fortunately for us, a Bathurst relative of one of the couples, was contacted, & she drove to Lithgow to personally pick up her family. Forty minutes later, Kate, driving a mini van, generously offered to take my wife & I, in tow with two heavy suit cases & hand luggage, as well as a single girl & another chap. We were the lucky ones! We have no idea how the young girl & elderly man, made it to Orange & beyond that evening!

Obviously our country is coming from drought conditions into a wet season & we can be sure road closures at Kelso, will continue to disrupt connections for those travelling to Bathurst & beyond. It is an absolute disgrace, not to have a daily train service at least between Sydney & Bathurst. It is unacceptable to travellers not to have alternative arrangements in place, when normal services are disrupted for whatever reason. It appears that Governments have absolutely no concern for country people, the backbone of this beautiful country. There is no "Gateway to the West"! Our non existent "train service" is pitiful to say the least! As Australians, we felt so embarrassed for the predicament our English visitor was faced with, after his 23 hour flight from London! The Asian tourists? They could barely comprehend the situation they were in, as their understanding of the English language seemed limited! They just wanted to tour the west!

Well done for those dedicated folk working tirelessly for "Rail Action" & our sincere thanks & appreciation! A regular train service to Bathurst & the central west is VITAL!!

Sydney rail service has a long road to hoe

I AM responding to the recent comments in support of an effective rail service to and from Bathurst.

I have been travelling between Sydney and Bathurst for over 25 years – mostly by plane and car. The train timetable has never been suitable in all that time.

Mr Toole was quoted as saying "at the moment we have zero service". That has been the case for decades.

During my frequent travels by plane many passengers were of the view that a business carriage providing suitable working desks and meeting facilities would be a major attraction to potential train travellers.

There were suggestions that up to 100 people each day travelled to Sydney for business reasons. And, of course, there are the many others for a variety of reasons – health issues, tourism and family connections to mention a few.

At least a suitably timed return trip would be a good start. It would be interesting to assess the number of cars which would be removed from the road if routing improvements were made and the journey made convenient and pleasant.

Recently I have tried to use the train to avoid the hassle of taking a car to Sydney. Some subsequent experiences on trains between Bathurst and Sydney were as follows:

■ On two occasions I was unable to travel by train as the bus to Lithgow was fully booked.

■ I needed to carry a large suitcase on one occasion as I was flying overseas from Sydney. I asked the female porter at Lithgow if I could put the case into what appeared to be an empty luggage compartment. I was told I could not.

Accordingly, unable to fit the bag on the rack in the carriage, I was forced to inconvenience other passengers as they struggled past my bag.

www.westernadvocate.com.au



Feedback

Text: 0413 698 439, Email: mail.westernadvocate@ruralpress.com
Mail: PO Box 11, Bathurst NSW 2795

■ I asked another porter where I could find the seat with the number on my ticket. He told me the number was a joke but the people in the office didn't know that and that I could sit anywhere.

In summary, yes, the service is pathetic and a disgrace to the rural based population.

Initially we need a convenient return daily service. Then we need a refinement of the facilities to service the needs of the community. This will require some analysis.

And, while I won't hold my breath, we need a change in social behaviour or some form of effective monitoring to make travel on trains a pleasant experience like so much of European travel.

We encourage overseas travellers to see our wonderful country and then subject them to significant base behaviour which leaves such a poor memory for them of Australia.

Best of luck, Rail Action Bathurst, with your attempts to improve the rail service between Bathurst and Sydney.

Don Grant, Bathurst



All letters and emails (no attachments) to the *Western Advocate* must carry the sender's full name, home address and day and evening telephone numbers for verification.

The sender's first name/initial and suburb/town will be published. Anonymous letters and nom de plumes are not accepted.

Ideally, letters will be a maximum of 250 words. By submitting your letter to us for publication you agree that we may edit the letter for legal, space or other reasons and may, after publication in the newspaper, republish it on the Internet or in other media.

W/A 26/3/12

**STATISTICAL INFORMATION REFERENCE VICTORIA
V/LINE**

VICTORIA V/LINE EXPERIENCE

Rail use in regional Victoria is at a 50 year high. Regional areas are experiencing unprecedented growth. Below are four reports which demonstrate the beneficial outcomes from having commuter rail services connecting with Melbourne.

1). Regional Train Services Win in Transport Plan

MORE than 40 kilometres of stand-alone rail tracks will increase services and reliability of regional Victorian trains, removing the bottleneck when regional trains reach the Melbourne rail network – under the Regional Rail Link project costing more than \$4 billion.

The announcement was made this afternoon under the government's much-anticipated \$10 billion Victorian Transport Plan.

The plan will also result in passenger trains returning to Maryborough by 2010 at a cost of \$50 million.

The Minister for Public Transport Lynne Kosky said Regional Rail Link would provide a faster connection between Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and Melbourne for Regional Fast Rail services, as well as regional passenger services across Victoria.

"V/Line is now experiencing passenger figures at a 60-year record," she said.

"Our investment into regional rail has paid off and now we are taking the necessary steps to ensure the network can grow, by adding more tracks and carriages to run more train services.

"Delivering the best transport system in Australia will mean Victorians can spend less time commuting and more time with family and friends."

Regional Rail Link will see the construction of 44 kilometres of twin track from West Werribee to Southern Cross Station via Tarneit and Sunshine, providing for the first time separate tracks for regional and metropolitan trains.

Source :

Bendigo Weekly <http://host3.designexperts.com.au/~bwarchiv/?p=7374>

2). Improving transport linkages

The transport system in the region needs to take account of important linkages to Melbourne, other regional centres and interstate locations. People in smaller towns and urban areas need to access services in large towns and the fast rail service, for education, health and community services and employment opportunities. As the population ages trip purposes will change.

Transport plans need updating to reflect rapid growth and change in the mix of industries in Bendigo and elsewhere. For example the Bendigo 2020 planning strategy was produced in 1991-92. Planning for the future public transport, roads and traffic management is needed now.

The transport and logistics industry is changing rapidly and transport and land use issues arise from changing needs for warehousing and the size of loads in the distribution chain. Manufacturing industries in the corridor

require a high level of access to sea and airports. Increased use of rail for freight and the consequent need for freight modal interchanges have been raised as transport issues

Particular issues raised in the corridor include completion of the Calder Highway duplication and access to the standard gauge rail network.

Source

http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/42717/BendigoCh5_App.pdf

3). "V/Line train and coach travel breaks records

Victorians continue to use regional public transport more than ever before with V/Line reporting a fifth consecutive year of patronage growth.

New data presented in V/Line's Annual Report shows ... a massive 89 per cent increase over 5 years. ... **[see chart attached]**

The growth shows that continuing investment into the Victorian regional rail network is leading to record patronage growth and investment into regional towns and cities.

...people were becoming more environmentally conscious about their travel decisions, using public transport was an easy way people could make a difference.

"For every person who uses the train that is potentially one car that is off the road causing congestion and pollution," he said.

"People are also continuing to think about the real savings that can be made using public transport. In some cases the cost of a weekly ticket with V/Line is the equivalent of three days car parking in central Melbourne. That is before you start to take into account other costs with running a car including fuel, insurance, registration and general wear and tear."

Source: V/Line Voice Newsletter, October 2010, page 1-2

<http://www.vline.com.au/pdf/publications/newsletters/issue61.pdf>

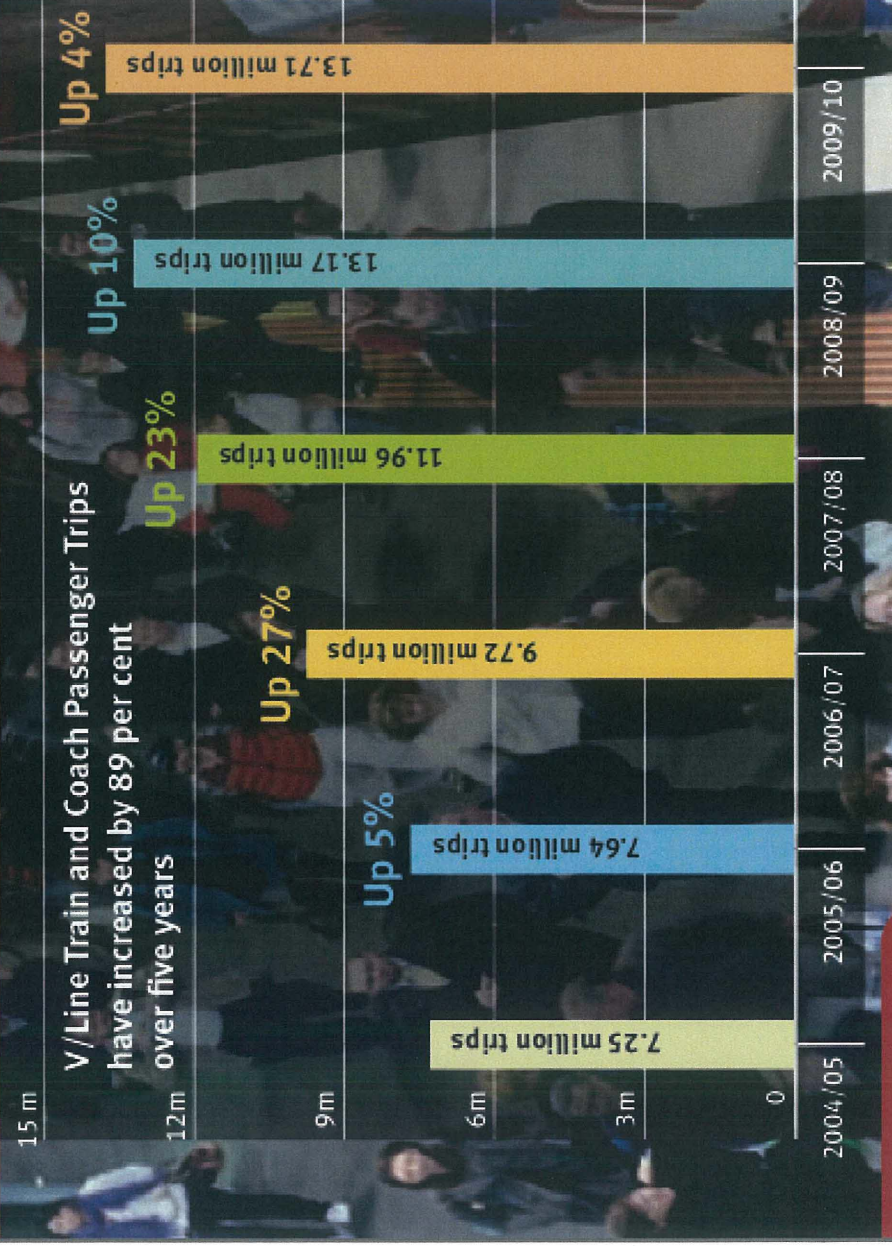
4). Improved rail services lead to decentralisation

Continuing investment into the Victorian regional rail network is leading to a sustained record investment into regional towns and cities.

"Early in this decade there was little if any growth in patronage of our rail services. This changed dramatically following the major infrastructure upgrades of 2005 and 2006, the subsequent roll-out of 40 new VLocity trains (5,600 extra seats), an average 20 per cent fare reduction in 2007, and the introduction of thousands of extra services from 2006.

There is no doubt that government investment in infrastructure upgrades and rolling stock have also been major catalysts for patronage increases of 29 per cent in 2006–07 and 23 per cent in 2007–08.”

Source: V/line 2007-08 Annual Report, page 5



V/Line train and coach travel breaks records

Victorians continue to use regional public transport more than ever before with V/Line reporting a fifth consecutive year of record patronage growth.

New data presented in V/Line's Annual Report shows a record 12.56 million trips were made on our trains in 2009-10, an increase of 4.2 per cent in the past year and a massive 89 per cent increase over five years.