

# Rails to Recovery for North West Victoria

## Reintroduction of a regional passenger rail service between Melbourne and Mildura serving families, business and tourism in the North West

This proposal involves the introduction of a standard gauge locomotive-hauled passenger service. It has the ability to be based in Melbourne or Mildura, running to Maryborough and connecting with the current broad gauge VLOCITY service through to Melbourne via Ballarat.

Benefits for the reintroduction of Passenger Rail Services to Mildura.

- Able to capture a high degree of population for improved public transportation (60,000 Mildura-Wentworth - 75,000 in corridor 130,000 in tri-state region)
- Largest Victorian population centre with no access to rail transport
- Upgrades to the current, infrequent public transport services
- Current Road coaches inhibit access for elderly and or persons with a disability
- Reduced reliance on the limited access to air transport in the region
- Reduced reliance on private transport catering for the whole community
- High community support for a reintroduced rail service.
- Ability to utilise existing upgrades from the Murray Basin Rail Project (MBRP) and recent Ballarat line investments
- Benefits to local communities including Maryborough, St Arnaud, Donald, Ouyen, Birchip, Wentworth

The train to Mildura will allow access to the region for tourists from Melbourne and support families to access Melbourne for social, medical or recreational activities.

In the various communities along the Mildura line there are many who rely on public transport as their only means. These are outlined below:

- Elderly citizens
- Students, apprentices and trainees
- Seasonal Workers
- Indigenous community [members](#)
- Tourists

In a diverse community such as the North West, all groups deserve access to effective public transport that is reliable, fast, affordable and provides good connectivity

This service will put Mildura and Melbourne under eight hours travel time and represent a competitive timeframe compared to car or coach travel.

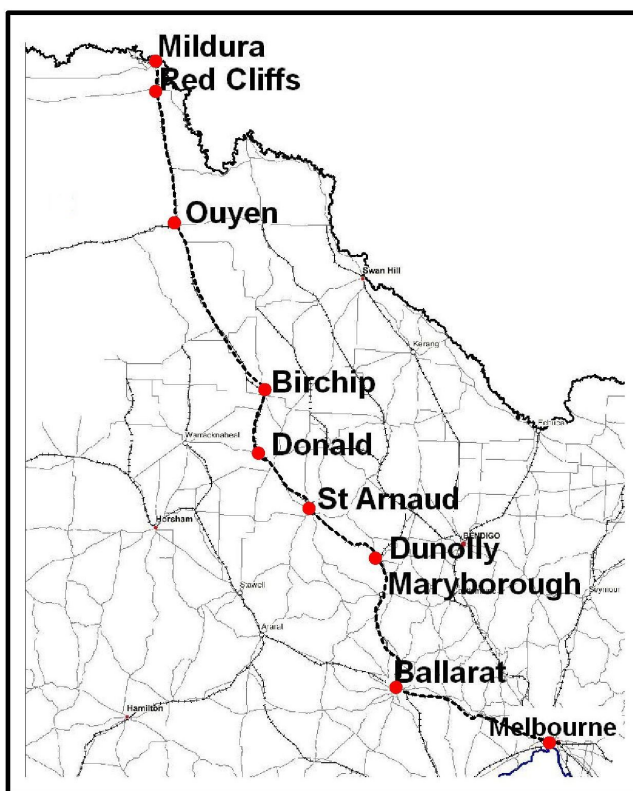
The significance of a passenger rail service to local tourism is important. Mildura and many of the communities have markets, festivals and events which would be highly supported by a reasonable passenger rail service.

This proposal sees the lowest capital cost of investment.

North of Maryborough the train will run on the newly-converted standard gauge rail line to Mildura. The line conversion and upgrade was part of the Murray Basin Rail Project. The first phase of the project has been completed.

The upgrade of track and infrastructure for the Murray Basin Rail project has so far delivered:

- The standardisation and upgrade of the track between Maryborough and Mildura to 80 km/hr speed limits over the whole of the track and included continuous welding of the track, the installation of new sleepers, ballast and rail fittings,
- The rationalisation of track infrastructure at disused locations,
- Withdrawal of many speed restrictions that hampered the line speeds.



**The advantages of this proposal:**

- Faster connection in and out of Melbourne using existing VLocity service for part of the journey between Melbourne and Maryborough.
- More frequent and reliable public transport for the North West region.
- This proposal services the student populations at Ballarat as well as Melbourne.
- This proposal provides for six services per week serving Dunolly. This would fulfil the promises made by the Minister in 2018 regarding the return of passenger trains to Dunolly.

The proposal uses Maryborough as the interface between the V/Line VLocity service and the proposed Mildura service.

Maryborough platform is sufficiently long enough to allow two VLocity sets to both occupy the platform and easily allow the transfer of passenger from one service to another.

The following is a sample schedule to provide for a country passenger service serving all of the major destinations on the Mildura line north of Maryborough.

It is based on a standard gauge service that would run on the existing standard gauge network between Maryborough and Mildura. The current V/Line service would meet this train at Maryborough.

This schedule has been based on the following data:

- The existing Overland train which is a locomotive hauled service and travels from Melbourne to Adelaide via Ararat. This provides data for a medium weight diesel hauled passenger train on similar topography.
  - Timetables can be improved significantly by utilising existing Standard Gauge V/locities along the corridor.
- Time, speed and distance comparisons with existing V/Line N Class passenger trains on such lines as Swan Hill and Warrnambool
  - As mentioned above the timetables can be significantly improved if existing Standard Gauge V/locity trains are used along this corridor.
- Calculated line speeds from current V/Line requirements on the track between Maryborough and Mildura.
- Is in line with current running times of 707 Operations Vineland Heriitage Trains which have been running in 2024

There is a minimum of capital works required for this proposal with Dunolly Station requiring restoration works to allow safe passenger access to trains.

The standard gauge track will need to be reconnected to the Dunolly platform. The rails, sleepers and rail bed have all been recently replaced and upgraded.

### Servicing Requirements

Minor/Major servicing and or repairs, can be effected with a run via Ararat and Geelong to Melbourne with a changeover easily provided the same way.

A proposed timetable for this service is shown:

	Km from SCS	Km between stops	Proposed Timetable		Km from SCS	Km between stops	Proposed Timetable	
			Mon Wed Fri				Sun Tue Thur	
			<b>VLocity</b>				<b>N Set</b>	
<b>Melbourne</b>		0	<b>9.16</b>		<b>Mildura</b>	573	0	<b>8.50</b>
<b>Ballarat</b>	119	119	<b>10.46</b>		<b>Red Cliffs</b>	558	15	<b>9.04</b>
<b>Maryborough (arr)</b>	187	68	<b>11.41</b>		<b>Hattah</b>	506	52	<b>9.37</b> if req
change			<b>N Set</b>		<b>Ouyen</b>	471	35	<b>10.22</b>
<b>Maryborough (dep)</b>	187	68	<b>12.01</b>		<b>Lascells</b>	407	56	<b>11.12</b> if req
<b>Dunolly</b>	209	22	<b>12.21</b>		<b>Birchip</b>	353	54	<b>12.07</b>
<b>St Arnaud</b>	262	53	<b>13.08</b>		<b>Donald</b>	301	52	<b>12.54</b>
<b>Donald</b>	301	39	<b>13.43</b>		<b>St Arnaud</b>	262	39	<b>13.29</b>
<b>Birchip</b>	353	52	<b>14.29</b>		<b>Dunolly</b>	209	53	<b>14.07</b>
<b>Lascells</b>	407	54	<b>15.17</b> if req		<b>Maryborough (arr)</b>	187	22	<b>14.27</b>
<b>Ouyen</b>	471	64	<b>16.14</b>		change		<b>VLocity</b>	
<b>Hattah</b>	506	35	<b>16.47</b> if req		<b>Maryborough (dep)</b>	187	22	<b>14.50</b>
<b>Red Cliffs</b>	558	52	<b>17.31</b>		<b>Ballarat</b>	119	68	<b>15.39</b>
<b>Mildura</b>	573	15	<b>17.44</b>		<b>Melbourne</b>	0	119	<b>17.22</b>
			<b>8 Hours 28 Mins</b>					<b>8 hrs 32 mins</b>

This timetable has been updated following the running of the 707 Operations inc. passenger train to

*Mildura in early June 2024*

**Costing of the proposal:**

The Parliamentary Budget Office provided an estimate of the costs associated with the introduction of this proposal in 2022 and suggested it would be less than \$30M to get this service into operation.

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