

Media Release

The Hon Ben Carroll MP
Minister for Public Transport
Minister for Roads and Road Safety



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HELPING TOURIST AND HERITAGE RAIL OPERATORS GET BACK ON TRACK

The Victorian Government is supporting tourist and heritage rail operators bounce back from the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic with \$1 million in funding.

Victoria's tourist and heritage rail operators perform an important role in preserving Victoria's rail history, drive economic activity and jobs in regional areas, and build social capital by providing opportunities for volunteering.

The support is to help the operators re-establish their operations and cover costs after they were unable to run their services for periods in 2020 and 2021.

Following an assessment process by VicTrack and the Department of Transport, the funding has been allocated to 15 groups that applied for the funding based on an assessment of what they needed to help them restart their operations.

The funding will help the groups recover, so they can focus on expanding their operations and attracting visitors onto the many heritage train and tram services throughout Victoria.

The allocation of the funding follows the release earlier in the year of *Preserving our rail history – a blueprint for the future*, which provides a strategy to help ensure that Victoria's tourist and heritage tram and railway sector has a sustainable future and can continue its important work.

The blueprint includes actions the government will take over the coming years to support organisations with expanding its volunteer bases, increasing visitors, improving coordination between groups, and gaining access to equipment, resources and rolling stock.

A new voice for the sector, the Sector Coordinating Board, is already helping organisations share information and support each other through the changes occurring in the system.

On top of the \$1 million being allocated to the rail operators, a further \$1.2 million of funding and grants is being provided to the sector to support the implementation of the blueprint. This is in addition to the over \$20 million in funding support made available to the sector over the past five years.

The Victorian Government provided \$11.2 million in funding to support Puffing Billy through the *Victorian Budget 2021/22*.

The government is also working with tourist and heritage rail groups whose operations were badly impacted by recent storms across central Victoria, the Dandenong Ranges and Gippsland.

For more information visit victrack.com.au

Quotes attributable to Minister for Public Transport Ben Carroll

"Victoria has the largest tourist and heritage tram and railway sector in the country, and the groups run popular tourist attractions and carry out essential work to preserve and protect the state's transport history."

"Operators rely on the revenue they receive from running services and unfortunately like many tourism operators their operations were severely impacted last year."

"We are now directing much needed funding to the groups, so they can pay their immediate costs and ensure their infrastructure is in good shape as their services get back up and running."

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