

Media Release

The Hon Martin Pakula MP

Minister for Industry Support and Recovery

Minister for Trade

Minister for Business Precincts

Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events

Minister for Racing



Friday, 3 December 2021

NEW PUFFING BILLY VISITOR CENTRE ADDS STEAM TO TOURISM REVIVAL

The Andrews Labor Government has ensured the future of one of Victoria's most popular and iconic tourist attractions, Puffing Billy Railway, with a new \$24.8 million Visitor Centre officially opened today.

Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events Martin Pakula joined Member for Monbulk James Merlino and community representatives to unveil the state-of-the-art Centre, which will service thousands of visitors each week at Lakeside Station in the heart of the Dandenong Ranges.

Backed by a \$12.7 million investment from the Labor Government, the Lakeside Visitor Centre will help attract a new generation of Puffing Billy enthusiasts as the much-loved train service returns to daily service.

The Lakeside Visitor Centre delivers premium facilities and attractions for tourists, day-trippers and school groups, honoring the rich history of the century-old heritage steam railway through a collection of steam-era artifacts and an immersive multimedia experience.

The Centre boasts a range of dining options featuring seasonal produce from the Yarra Valley and the Dandenong Ranges, as well as a hi-tech function space to host workshops, conferences, events and school excursions.

Daily train services return to the much-loved heritage railway from today, enticing visitors back to the Dandenong Ranges in an important boost to the local economy.

Managed by the Emerald Tourist Railway Board, the open-air steam train plays an important role in preserving Victoria's railway history and delivers an unforgettable journey through scenic bushland that attracted more than 500,000 visitors annually prior to the pandemic.

The Lakeside Visitor Centre was co-funded by Puffing Billy Railway and the Commonwealth Government.

For further information on the Visitor Centre and the railway's operations – including to book tickets – visit puffingbilly.com.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events Martin Pakula

"Puffing Billy is loved by Victorians and visitors and with these terrific new facilities will continue to win hearts for generations to come."

"The Visitor Centre gives an historic railway a very modern lift and comes on line at the right time as we open up as an economy and tourism businesses plan for a strong recovery."

Quotes attributable to Member for Monbulk James Merlino

"Puffing Billy is much more than a train ride – it has created memorable moments for tourists, day-trippers and school groups for over a century."

"The new Centre will ensure the railway continues to be a significant drawcard for the region into the future, underpinning important jobs."

Media contact: Shaun Phillips 0407 553 763 | shaun.phillips@minstaff.vic.gov.au