

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



Tuesday, 8 March 2022

PUFFING BILLY RAILWAY BILL INTRODUCED INTO PARLIAMENT

The Andrews Labor Government is securing the future of the iconic Puffing Billy Railway with the introduction of new legislation into Parliament today.

The *Puffing Billy Railway Bill* will replace the *Emerald Tourist Railway Act 1977*. It provides a modern framework to future-proof the operations and governance of the attraction so it can operate more effectively and continue to draw visitors to the Dandenong Ranges.

The Bill will see the *Emerald Tourist Railway Board* renamed the *Puffing Billy Railway Board* with updated responsibilities that reflect its operation as a significant state tourist attraction.

It will also support Puffing Billy's partnerships with the Dandenong Ranges and Yarra Valley businesses, including wineries and gourmet producers, to showcase the region and their products to visitors.

Recognising the importance of volunteers, and their invaluable contribution to the running and preservation of the historic railway, including the restoration of trains, is another key focus of the changes.

The open-air steam train preserves Victoria's railway history. The Dandenong Ranges has been home to Puffing Billy Railway for 121 years, with generations of families making lifelong memories at the much-loved attraction.

Puffing Billy attracted around 500,000 visitors annually prior to the pandemic.

The recently opened \$24.8 million state-of-the-art Lakeside Visitor Centre and return of the time-honoured tradition of sitting on the sills provides a world-class experience for tourists, day-trippers and school groups.

The Puffing Billy Railway is supported by 300 volunteers and two thirds of its suppliers are Victorian companies.

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

"Puffing Billy Railway has been a favourite destination for Victorians and international visitors for well over a century, and local businesses still get the benefits from this attraction today."

"The Puffing Billy Railway Bill will improve the management of the railway and ensure its success for years to come. This means more jobs and flow-on opportunities for local businesses."

Quote attributable to Member for Monbulk James Merlino

"Puffing Billy is a major driver of the local economy and we're making sure that this popular attraction continues to be a drawcard for the Dandenong Ranges and broader Yarra Valley region."

Quote attributable to Member for Eastern Victoria Harriet Shing

"For over a century, families from all over the world have discovered the magic of a steam train ride through some of the most beautiful scenery in Australia, and the Puffing Billy Railway Bill will ensure this iconic experience can continue well into the future."

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