Wednesday, 25 May 2022

**SUPPORTING VICTORIA’S TOURIST AND HERITAGE RAIL SECTOR**

The Andrews Labor Government is offering further financial support for Victoria’s tourist and heritage rail sector.

Minister for Public Transport Ben Carroll said a total of $400,000 in funding is being made available for eligible groups within the sector to continue carrying out projects to preserve or improve state owned assets.

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.

Ranging from small operators – to the iconic Puffing Billy Railway - there are also a number of tram and train museums that manage rolling stock or assets across the state.

This further funding will help 16 of these tourist and heritage railway organisations continue to do their important work – with projects including repairing, restoring, or refurbishing state owned assets, delivering approved projects on buildings or rolling stock, and works in the rail corridor such as weed control or vegetation management.

Applications for the funding will be managed by VicTrack and the Department of Transport. Eligible groups within the sector are encouraged to apply by nominating their projects that would benefit from the funding.

It follows the release last year of *Preserving our rail history – a blueprint for the future*, which provides a strategy to help ensure that our tourist and heritage tram and railway sector has a sustainable future.

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

A 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 $400,000 being offered to the sector and the $1 million allocated by the Labor Government last year to help the sector recover from the impacts of COVID-19 restrictions, a further $1.2 million has also been provided to support the implementation of the blueprint.

This is in addition to the over $20 million in support made available to the sector over the past six years.

More information can be found online at: victrack.com.au

**Quotes attributable to Minister for Public Transport Ben Carroll**

*“The tourist and heritage rail sector carries out an enormous amount of work to preserve Victoria’s historic rail buildings, rolling stock and other state assets.”*

*“That’s why we’re now offering the sector further funding to ensure they can continue carrying out these important projects to preserve or improve state owned assets, as well as continue to operate and expand well into the future.”*