

10 May 2021

## NEW TOURIST PRECINCT AT BULLARTO

Council will lead a project to create a working museum at Bullarto Station thanks to a \$500,000 grant from the Victorian State Government's Regional Infrastructure Fund.

The project is a result of years of planning and lobbying by the Daylesford Spa Country Railway who operate a tourist railway between Bullarto and Daylesford on the old Daylesford Line.

This is the second of a three-stage project that aims to boost tourism to the small town and support local businesses.

"This project involves recreating the Bullarto Station as it was in the 1930s, with a replica of the old station building, and restoration of the platform, gardens and amenities," said Mayor, Cr Lesley Hewitt.

"It's a wonderful project for Bullarto and will provide visitors an opportunity to experience a taste of rural life in the 1930s and learn about the critical role of railways in rural communities.

"We look forward to delivering this project in partnership with the Spa Country Railway."

Steve Fiume, Spa Country Railway Vice President, said the group is thrilled the project will go ahead.

"This will be a fantastic asset for the railway and the region, with passengers able to experience Bullarto as it was in 1930."

Mr Fume said the railway is proving to be popular, particularly as people are holidaying locally post-COVID lockdowns.

"We've nearly surpassed our 2019 passenger numbers, which was 24,000 passenger journeys for the year. We're already on our way to reaching that and it's only May," he said.

Barry Fell, Director of the Spa Country Railway, said the railway station at Bullarto was once the heart of the town.

“People left for war here, it was the post office – the post and papers came here every day, that’s how everything was delivered,” said Mr Fell.

“Women were often the caretakers of stations. With the new building here we will be able to show how they worked and what it was like for them without running water and only using kerosene lights.

“That’s the story we can now tell – the story of the people who ran the railway when it was the communication and travel lifeline for rural Victoria.”

Along with increasing patronage to Bullarto Station, and preserving the history of Victorian Railways, the project aims to open marketing opportunities for the benefit of local businesses.

“Nearby wineries, accommodation businesses, local producers and farms will have the opportunity to boost customers as the number of people who disembark in Bullarto each weekend increases,” said Cr Hewitt.

The Bullarto Station operated between 1880 and 1978.

The project is ready for the final design phase, including planning and permits. On-site construction is expected to begin early next year.

Council will manage the delivery of the project, with support from a project working group, which will include representatives from the Spa Country Railway.

In addition to the \$500,000 Regional Infrastructure Fund grant, Council will contribute over \$125,000 and Spa Country Railway will contribute \$50,000 to the project.

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