

## Regional Rail Link

### Key messages with evidence and examples

#### Overall

Regional Rail Link is not just about laying tracks.

It is part of how we support growth and renewal in Melbourne's West, and the regions.

It is also how we protect and improve Melbourne's liveability – reducing noise and road congestion, upgrading rundown stations and encouraging business and development.

1. You can't fix the Met if you don't fix trains in the West
2. RRL means building new lines and new platforms. More capacity in the Met helps everyone who uses it
3. Urban growth that's happening in the West needs rail infrastructure from the start – not as an afterthought
4. Regional Rail Link will bring long overdue upgrades to stations in the West, and development and business opportunities in the areas surrounding them
5. Delaying Regional Rail Link means costs will increase and disruption will go on for longer.

#### Leadwest councils:

LeadWest is a regional organisation for Melbourne's Western suburbs, formed by the local councils of Brimbank, Maribyrnong, Melton, Moonee Valley and Wyndham. Its objective is to support sustainable growth and development. Together the councils represent more than 600,000 rural and urban residents and some of Australia's fastest growing areas.

- **Brimbank City Council** is Melbourne's second large municipality. It covers 123 square km and has more than 170,000 residents.<sup>1</sup> It includes 25 suburbs including Sunshine, St Albans, Keilor and Sydenham.
- **Maribyrnong City Council** had 63,355 residents at the time of the 2006 Census.<sup>2</sup> The council area includes the suburbs of Footscray, Maribyrnong, Yarraville, Kingsville and Braybrook.
- **Melton City Council** covers one of the fastest growing areas in Australia. Every week about 41 local babies are born and the community grows by just over 52 households.<sup>3</sup> It is a mixture of urban and rural and its major townships are Caroline Springs and Melton. In 2009 it had about 100,000 residents.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.brimbank.vic.gov.au/>, accessed 1 March 2011.

<sup>2</sup> <http://profile.id.com.au/Default.aspx?id=127&pg=138&gid=10&type=enum>, accessed 1 March 2011.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.melton.vic.gov.au/Page/Page.aspx?Page\\_Id=55&h=1&p=1](http://www.melton.vic.gov.au/Page/Page.aspx?Page_Id=55&h=1&p=1), accessed 1 March 2011.

<sup>4</sup> <http://profile.id.com.au/Default.aspx?id=116&pg=210>, accessed 1 March 2011.

- The **City of Moonee Valley Council** was formed in 1994 following the merger of the Cities of Essendon and Keilor. Today the Council represents 111,000 residents in 43,000 households.<sup>5</sup>
- **Wyndham City Council** has experienced the largest and fastest growth in all Victorian local government areas and is the fourth fastest growing in Australia. Its population is estimated to exceed 158,000 in June 2011. The municipality covers 542 square km on Melbourne's western fringe, including Werribee, Hoppers Crossing, Tarneit, Point Cook, Wyndham Vale and Truganina.<sup>6</sup>

## What's in Regional Rail Link:

The works are divided into eight sections: railway signaling and control systems, plus seven sections of track:

- Southern Cross Station platforms 15 and 16 (currently being built by Metro)
- Southern Cross Station to Maribyrnong River (4.75 km)
- Maribyrnong River to West Footscray station (2.35 km)
- West Footscray to west of Sunshine station (5.0 km)
- West of Sunshine station to Deer Park West (8.4 km)
- Deer Park West to West Werribee Junction (25.5 km)
- West Werribee Junction / Geelong Line interchange (approximately 1.5 km)

## The Met and V/Line are overcrowded and still growing:

Suburban services are full and demand keeps growing.

- Patronage on metropolitan trains grew by 2.7 per cent in 2009-10, with 219.3 million passenger trips taken. Metropolitan train patronage grew by more than 85% between 1998-99 and 2009-10.<sup>7</sup>
- In 2010 the Chief Executive of Metro, Andrew Lezala, told a Victorian parliamentary inquiry that Metro plans to double patronage on the Metro over the next eight years. "Our overall plan is to double patronage on the railway during the life of the franchise, which requires a major increase in the system's capacity," Mr Lezala said.<sup>8</sup>
- To move more people on the Met we need more trains and more platforms. Trains are constantly forced to wait outside busy stations for a spare platform.
- RRL means building new platforms and lines around existing stations. This will support local population growth and reduce bottlenecks in the West, and it will also add greater capacity to the Met overall.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.mvcc.vic.gov.au/about-the-council/demographics-and-history/demographics.aspx>, accessed 1 March 2011.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/aboutwyndham/wyndhamcity/demographics>, accessed 1 March 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Department of Transport website, 'Track Record', July – September 2010, <http://www.doi.vic.gov.au/DOI/Internet/transport.nsf/AllDocs/391D306BF13B9D7ECA2577B300130A05?OpenDocument#patronage>, accessed 22 February 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Ashley Gardiner, 'Metro wants to double patronage on Melbourne's rail network', *Herald-Sun*, 2 March 2010.

- Separating Met and V/Line services, as the RRL would, will make timetabling easier for the Met. This is because Metro will not have to schedule its services around V/Line trains which it “is powerless to control”, as the Chief Executive of Metro, Andrew Lezala, told a Victorian parliamentary inquiry in 2010.<sup>9</sup>

Station car parks are overflowing.

- Railway station car parks at Werribee, Hoppers Crossing and Laverton are full by 6.15-6.30am. Parking at Laverton stretches all the way back to Aircraft Station.

V/Line services also have strong and increasing demand.

- In October 2010 V/Line reported a fifth consecutive year of record growth in patronage, from 7.25 million train trips in 2004/05 to 13.71 million in 2009/10.<sup>10</sup>

RRL will allow regional services to increase and be more reliable.

- RRL will separate regional trains from metropolitan trains, meaning that for the first time Geelong, Bendigo and Ballarat will get dedicated tracks from Sunshine to Southern Cross station – where they will arrive at new platforms 15 and 16, which are already under construction.

### Meeting growth demands and supporting urban renewal:

Geelong, Bendigo and Ballarat all benefit from improved rail services with Melbourne.

- RRL will separate regional trains from metropolitan trains, meaning that for the first time Geelong, Bendigo and Ballarat will get dedicated tracks from Sunshine to Southern Cross Station – where they will arrive at new platforms 15 and 16, which are already under construction.

RRL will directly service Tarneit and Wyndham Vale which are experiencing massive population growth. This is once-only opportunity to install rail infrastructure before most of the houses are built.

- Tarneit and Wyndham Vale are growing as mainly young families seek cheaper housing than is available in Werribee and Hoppers Crossing.
- Tarneit’s population has grown from 7,613 in 2006 and should reach 19,435 in 2011. The population is estimated to reach 30,712 in 2016, 50,388 in 2026 and 63,512 by 2031. This means more than 20,000 extra dwellings by 2031.<sup>11</sup>
- Wyndham Vale had a population of 10,807 in 2006 that should reach 16,197 in 2011. It is estimated to grow to 20,341 by 2016, 28,706 by 2021, 37,350 by 2026 and 44,911 by 2031.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Clay Lucas, ‘Metro pledges to double rail patronage by 2017’, *The Age*, 3 March 2010.

<sup>10</sup> ‘V/Line train and coach travel breaks records’, *V/Line Voice*, Issue 61, October 2010.

<sup>11</sup> City of Wyndham, 2006-2031 – Forecast ID, <http://forecast2.id.com.au/default.aspx?id=124&pg=5000>, accessed 22 February 2011.

<sup>12</sup> City of Wyndham, 2006-2031 – Forecast ID, <http://forecast2.id.com.au/default.aspx?id=124&pg=5000>, accessed 22 February 2011.

- Residents in Tarneit and Wyndham Vale are currently up to 8km from a train station.
- It takes 20-35 minutes to get a bus from Tarneit to Hoppers Crossing Station.

RRL will drive redevelopment in Sunshine, Footscray and West Footscray – which supports population and economic growth in the Western suburbs.

- **Sunshine Station** is surrounded by 8 hectares of vacant or undeveloped land that is government owned. The station is badly connected to the main street with pockets of poor visibility that affect passenger safety. The surrounding area is rundown and dangerous.
  - A new plaza entry means the station will be safer and easier to use, and would improve the general amenity of the street.
  - Sunshine Station would become part of the Melbourne/Geelong route, in addition to the Ballarat and Bendigo lines, creating a hub for Western region trains.
  - An extra platform means many more services could use the station.
  - The underutilised public land could be thoughtfully developed, consistent with the state government's policy to open up inner city housing.
- **Footscray Station** is poorly connected to its environment and its surroundings are badly rundown. RRL addresses these issues by upgrading the station facilities with a new forecourt entrance. The footbridge will be extended and fitting escalators and a new lift which will improve access.
- **West Footscray Station** is an isolated and rundown old station at the back of Whitten Oval and disconnected from the nearby populations that use it. Pedestrian access is poor. RRL would provide a massive overhaul of this station which is long overdue:
  - This includes new station buildings; a new forecourt; a footbridge with stairs and lift access; additional car parking spaces and disability access.
  - Two new platforms means more services.

RRL will address major congestion and safety problems at the two Anderson Street level crossings near Sunshine Station.

- Under the RRL plan, both Anderson St level crossings will be removed. This would improve safety and would also reduce traffic congestion close to the station; the two crossings are only 500 metres apart and are used by freight trains. Local traffic is often held up by trains up to 1km long.

### Delays to funding in February 2011:

Although the project was announced in 2008 and was to be funded by shared state/federal funding, in early 2011 both the state and federal government flagged delays and possible reductions in funding. The federal government announced that several major projects would be reviewed after major flood damage in QLD and NSW. The new Victorian Government said the cost of RRL had been underestimated and may result in changes to the plan.

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- On 4 February 2011 the Victorian Minister for Transport, Terry Mulder, told ABC Radio that a cost blowout will force changes to Regional Rail Link. It was estimated that the cost would rise from \$4.3 billion to more than \$5 billion. The Minister said that no decision had been made but some Commonwealth money will be “delayed” and the project will be “reprofiled”.<sup>13</sup>
- On 8 February the federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Anthony Albanese, announced that the \$500 million of federal funding for RRL “would re-profiled in order to free up additional funding for the urgent task of rebuilding flood affected communities” but that, “Planning on each will continue and all of them will be delivered”.<sup>14</sup>
- A few days after these statements, valuations were sent to the first 24 residents whose homes were subject to compulsory acquisition. (A total of 30 homes and 84 businesses are affected). Premier Ted Baillieu confirmed that the acquisition of homes would continue despite the review.<sup>15</sup>
- The federal money is tagged for RRL and will not be available for other purposes if the Victorian Government were to abandon RRL – the Victorian Government needs to use it or lose it.

Delays will bring uncertainty and stop investment – public and private – in redevelopment.

- RRL was announced several years ago and private and local council planning has occurred based on the plan becoming reality.
  - Land was released in Tarneit and Wyndham Vale was resisted for a long time because of the lack of transport, but went ahead based on the planned rail services.
  - Potential private investment, especially around Footscray and Sunshine Stations, will be delayed until the final form of the stations is resolved.
  - Costs for the total project will be lower if they are done now as a package. If parts of RRL are delayed and become stand-alone projects (such as the removal of level-crossings) they will be more costly and the total disruption will be longer.

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<sup>13</sup> ABC radio news, 4 February 2011, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/02/04/3129821.htm>, accessed 23 February 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, media release, *Funds Re-Profiled to Assist with Flood Recovery*, 8 February 2011, [http://www.minister.infrastructure.gov.au/aa/releases/2011/February/AA016\\_2011.htm](http://www.minister.infrastructure.gov.au/aa/releases/2011/February/AA016_2011.htm), accessed 23 February 2011.

<sup>15</sup> Marika Dobbin, ‘We’ve been ripped off, say residents on regional rail route’, *The Age*, 15 February 2011.