

PAPER PREPARED FOLLOWING DISCUSSIONS WITH BRETT WHELAN FROM YARRA VALLEY RAILWAY AND MATT SMITHIES FROM THE NATIONAL TRUST.

The Launceston and North East Railway (LNER) have been mentored by Yarra Valley Railway in Victoria which commenced in a similar way.

Yarra Valley Railway is an example of what can be done by volunteers in establishing an economically viable tourist railway experience from a disused railway line. Despite the railway line being pulled up and the bridges dismantled these volunteers have created a tourist icon.

Brett Whelan outlined what has been achieved in the last 4 years.

Brett's first comments were:

"The Yarra Valley railway can be described as a model for the North East – especially when you consider the existing infrastructure."

"I don't want to be negative about the bikes. There are plenty of bike paths, they can go anywhere but why would you put them on an existing track."

Yarra Valley Railway

- No train running on the line for over 30 years. Railway line pulled up and the bridges dismantled.
- Combination of federal funding and local community support has restored 8kms of line and 16 bridges in four years.
- The project is about job creation, upskilling of volunteers as well as apprenticeships for existing tradespeople.
- It is about preserving railway structures and oral history for future generations.
- There is a positive cash flow of \$150,000 per year, it is operating to maximum capacity 200,000 passengers on the current timetable and membership is over 500 and growing.

- Benefits to tourism with amenity and regional tourist profile; the arts and culture through restoration of heritage structures; and infrastructure which is now self funding.

Parallels with the North East Line

- Brett stated that he was in the North East 6 months ago and couldn't believe the state of the track. It is in incredibly good condition. We had nothing like it. Our community just had a strip of dirt.
 - The parallels are very strong – the scenery and community very similar to the NE.
 - This is a part of Tasmanian Heritage.
 - Yarra Glen is similar – it is only a small community – people think it is an amazing hot spot for tourism.
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Launceston and North East Railway (LNER), North East Residents and Farmers (NERAF) working towards the North East Heritage Railway icon for the state.

A passenger heritage railway available for the whole community to enjoy! It will create jobs and economic development.

1. Donations and pledges and in-kind funding total in excess of \$2.4 million.
2. The existing railway has been assessed by a qualified track inspector who has stated that it is 95% ready for use. It is too good to lose.
3. This is community owned project that will be brought to life by volunteers as opposed to a government funded project using taxpayers money or a privately funded project subject to the whim of shareholders and accountants.

4. This project is fully funded to the extent that it can operate at base level. Built visitor experiences can be added to the core train experience as funding permits.
 5. 50 mtrs of line has been constructed at Karoola by volunteers (value of inkind labour equipment and materials \$8,000). The DP Railcar and trailer are being refurbished ready for use.
 6. Tourist and Heritage passenger rail is volunteer based, philanthropy/good will funded operation and has been proven to create jobs and boost economic development.
 7. There are qualified people available to bring the line up to standard and keep it operational.
 8. Experienced retired tradesmen, highly skilled construction and railway personnel will be available to up skill the community to enable further employment opportunities. Jobs will be available across a range of businesses in the sectors of construction, manufacturing, food, accommodation, retail and transport.
 9. Opportunities are unlimited for future commercial development for businesses in Launceston, Lilydale & Scottsdale. Historical museums and workshops can be developed.
 10. The train will cater for everyone –locals, tourists, children, our seniors, and people with physical disabilities – everyone. The train will have provision for bicycle storage.
 11. Heritage trains open up the market for commercial and community groups eg. Schools, enthusiast groups and social and commercial tourism operators.
 12. Train operations will not be weather dependant or sensitive – preserved railways often experience better loading when weather prohibits other outdoor activities.
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Matt Smithies

The National Trust Tasmanian Board comprises 6 plus. 3 are members and 3 are government based and it works well. We sit outside of government but operate under State Government Legislation. It makes the funding process easier. It only takes one generation and it is lost.

- We want to preserve the North East Railway line. We are hearing about it in the community. We would see an oral history program, interpretation.
- The privately owned rail car, can become a charitable gift and get valued and donated to LNER – can be put it on lengthy loan to the community (40-50 year) and then we can then get a grant to work on it.

Project of community wellness

- When you conserve and have heritage projects in a community there are knock on effects.
- Community identity, mental health, liaison and inclusion

We as heritage practitioners talk about that and it is called motherhooding but there is a system where you can track it.

Brett Whelan

The Yarra Valley Railway – It is operated by an Incorporated Board which is effective as most of the people have come from a community group or business background. Only 3 people with a railway enthusiasts background.

- There was no train running on the line for over 30 years. We have restored structures through the corridor that were built in the 1880's using conservation architects.
- Heritage Victoria have come to the railway and said that they were loving what we are doing. What is the next project that you would like to see get up?
 - (1) There is a water tank that was built in 1879 and is the largest structure in the region that still exists. They gave us a grant for \$200,000.
 - (2) There is a fully intact locomotive shed. The goods shed (1880's) has been fully restored.

- The community have seen this total renewal and state visitation is going through the roof. It is totally community driven at the moment. During the last 12 months many professionals have come on board.
- The State Government is giving surplus rolling stock to the group to restore as they are doing such a great job. It is up to 130 years old.

The History of Yarra Valley Restoration

- There was a need bring in the Yarra Valley Council as it is almost a council project.
- Received federal government funding of 3.5mill.
- The community had a strip of dirt – how can we make this happen?
- Through donations and community fund raising we built 4 kms of track and established a fledgling service. (What happened was that we built it and then they came. All the locals supported it.)
- It worked so well that the community wanted us to get the next 8 kms of track done. We have to join the communities. It has now linked the towns. (It is 13kms between Healesville and Yarra Glen).
- We have started putting in signs of what used to be here. Important to put signage up. Interpretation.
- Council have just cleared a plot and put in a plaque about why railways came into existence.
- We got machines in to clear remanent vegetation, weed species – finding stumps and old saw blades. We are turning into a park to preserve what is there.
- The locals have forgotten because it didn't get passed down through the generations.
- It has taken four years to fully rebuild the track which included 16 bridges fully rebuilt by volunteers. Thousands of invasive trees such as radiata pine.

Preservation of History

- Once you start rebuilding areas it is really good to see what happens. We are rebuilding Tarawarra Station and the locals start coming out and saying that they have this stuff like scales (1880) hand trucks – they have preserved it.
- I am a believer in getting history before it is lost.
- We are at that last part of generational change. Modern technology has done an amazing job of recording history for the last 20 years and we have those generations from the 1950's and 1960's with the last link to the generations before.
- This is where projects like this help those skills and oral histories to be passed down.

Training and upskilling

- Projects are about job creation, you have a project and you can have apprentices on or tradies that don't have heritage skills and there is a whole lot of upskilling and training.
- At Yarra Valley we have tradesmen that pay for their apprentices to come and work on the station to learn how to do traditional rendering, how to work with hand carving planes etc. cutters and joiners.
- The upskilling of the volunteer base gives job readiness to locals because they were unskilled. They get to use an excavator in a non-time sensitive situation where they wouldn't get a chance to do this.
- Important how the community has come together, especially in the township level around a particular project eg. The restoration of the rolling stock – well over 100 years old – has involved the timber milling to mill it back to its original size, the paint retailers providing paint – sending their staff down to match paint. Doing it the old way before there were computers. You only might learn how to hand mix paints with powder and oxides for three or four jobs.

Conservation of buildings and rolling stock

- The conservational architect that we have is well renowned Frazer Brown, takes cuttings of paints put them under the microscope and can date and pick out the scheme and paints it back as it was original. This is what we did with Yarra Glen Station.
- Heritage Victoria have now realised that this paint scheme actually was used throughout all the Victorian railways and was a very narrow window. They have now put it into their register.
- It has changed the dynamics of the paint. He gets involved in the carriages – the vinyl, taking stuff up, taking samples to match. This is part of the reason that we have had so much success with the National Trust Victoria.

Victorian Tourist and Heritage Railways

- In Victoria there are 20 tourist and heritage railways.
- They are all operating at surpluses.
- From a tourist aspect – over 800,000 passengers were carried and that is growing.
- One of the key things that is done so well in other places of the world is that it is living history. You are not having stuffed dummies in the corner pretending they are someone, you have people living it – in costume, showing the way it used to operate and that as the generations move further away from having memories of it is becoming more and more important.
- The reason that we have such a large percentage of children coming to the railway is because their parents are saying this is how your grandfather travelled or worked. This creates heroes within the family.
- This is how do you get the children there – they are excited.
- You can have a discussion about diesel electric and vintage steam power however it is subjective.

- One thing with the **vintage rail motor**, you get into it and you know that it is old. All of a sudden people's perception of whether it is steam or diesel disappear.
- The internal combustion engine is on its last legs, there are dramatic changes. All we are going to have left are going to be heritage railways to remind us of our past.
- We are not talking about our generation we are talking about preserving it for future generations.

Observations of Tasmania Heritage

- I have been to Tasmania a lot one of the things I was always constantly amazed at how Tasmania undersells itself. Coming from the mainland you look and just see opportunity.
- The general population does not understand that we have heritage.
- It is a lot of heritage and we didn't tear it down.
- The train is preserving that part of living history.

Tasmania is about to rip it all up to put a bike trail down. Bikes can go on the train

