



MILDURA FUTURE READY



PROJECT SNAPSHOT

Likely route

- Mildura to Melbourne via Maryborough and Ballarat

Travel time

- Less than seven hours to remain a viable/ convenient option to other forms of road transport

Reasons supporting return of passenger rail

- Equity - only large population centre without a passenger train
- Large disadvantaged population who may not be able to drive or afford to fly
- Large elderly population
- Inadequate existing public passenger services between Mildura and Melbourne
- Strong and consistent demand from the community
- Price of air tickets
- Distance from specialist medical services
- Distance from tertiary institutions

Funding options

Based on recent rail funding packages, the Commonwealth Government will be a key funding source. Examples include:

- The majority of the \$4 billion for the regional rail project in Melbourne's west
- Co-contributing to the \$1.6 billion regional rail package in the 2016 Budget
- Committing \$30 million to the Melbourne Airport rail feasibility study

State and Government co-operation is also a proven option, with the \$440 million for the Murray Basin Rail project a prime example.

Return of Passenger Rail Services

The return of a passenger rail service between Mildura and Melbourne would significantly reduce the impacts of Sunraysia's isolation, particularly for low income earners, the elderly, young people without a licence and people with a disability. It would also provide another way for tourists to visit the district. Collectively these benefits would improve the social, health and economic wellbeing of our population and stimulate Sunraysia's economy through jobs and population growth. This project is part of the Mildura Future Ready strategy.

Background

There has been strong and growing support for the return of Mildura's passenger rail service since it was withdrawn in September 1993. This has included the formation of lobby groups, both locally and regionally, as well as a recent petition that attracted 8500 signatures. Mildura is the only large Victorian population centre without passenger train access.

Mildura Rural City Council's role

Council's role in returning Mildura's passenger rail service would largely be to lobby government and advocate for the project on behalf of the community. A first step could be to commence a feasibility study to analyse Sunraysia's social, health and economic needs and how a passenger rail service would address them.

The study would also examine the infrastructure needed and associated costs and would need to show that it would be affordable, deliver reasonable travel times between Mildura and Melbourne (less than seven hours), and would serve all towns within the municipality through links to improved coach services.

Factors to be taken into account include the fact that safety measures could need to be upgraded at 145 level crossings, and that the new service would need to run on Standard Gauge rail line to be compatible with the impending New Generation Regional Train.

Studies by rail experts have also shown that in order for a project of this size and scale to be returned, there needs to be a united approach from communities and Councils along the rail line. As the largest Council area among these municipalities, Mildura could lead this united advocacy approach. This could include municipalities such as Buloke, Northern Grampians, Central Goldfields, and possibly Swan Hill and Wentworth.

What's next?

Investigate the establishment of a feasibility study for the return of Mildura's passenger rail service. Lobby State and Commonwealth Governments to fund the project.

