

Tram plans continue on track

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Government funds \$73,000 feasibility study for trams

By **MARIZA FIAMENGO**

A PLAN to return trams to Ballarat's streets has moved a step closer.

The Federal Government has funded a \$73,000 study into the feasibility of linking Ballarat's major tourist attractions through a tram system.

Ballarat ran a 20km urban tram system until 1971 when a drop in patronage and a high upgrade bill closed it down.

Ballarat Tourism and the City of Ballarat have called for the revival of trams for the past few years.

Ballarat MHR Michael Ronaldson hoped the feasibility study would prove the initiative would create jobs and boost the tourism industry.

"The initiative aims to strengthen the economic, employment and social returns from the tourism industry to

LOOKING BACK

BALLARAT saw its first trams in 1887 when they were horse drawn. The system was electrified in 1905 and had about 20km of track around the main streets of Ballarat.

They were removed from Ballarat's streets in 1971 due to high maintenance costs and drops in patronage.

A tram track around Lake Wendouree represents the last reminder of this link with Ballarat's past.

The Ballarat Tramway Museum runs this service on weekends and during the school holidays.

Its secretary Peter Winspur said trams had remained in people's hearts despite the advances in transport technology.

"There is something about special trams," Mr Winspur said.

"Wherever they are in the world they are loved."

the community," Mr Ronaldson said.

The Central Highlands Area Consultative Committee, which promoted this project for the funding, believes this could deliver significant tourism jobs to the region.

"The main issue is getting people between the main tourist points in a way that is convenient, cheaper and fun," ACC chairman Eugene Kneebone said.

"This study will look at the best way to do this."

The study will consider a tram route, capital expenditure

needed, running costs and technical issues.

It is expected to be complete by the end of this year.

Ballarat Tourism executive director Dianne Smith said a tram service would reflect the region's history and help move tourists to different attractions in the region.

It has pushed for action on these issues for several years. "We want to see employment outcomes and good business opportunities and something that is another attraction for Ballarat," she said.