

# Sub-hour journey a must

BY BRENDAN WRIGLEY

IN THE short term, Committee for Ballarat's goal for the Ballarat V/Line service is clear: obtain a 59-minute service from Ballarat to Southern Cross Station during the morning and evening peaks.

Depending on the time of day, Ballarat passengers travelling to and from Melbourne can expect to travel for between 65 and 95 minutes should the service run on time.

While commuters a decade ago could expect to get to the Southern Cross platform in just over an hour, a rapid increase in patronage along the line has caused service times to continually balloon out.

Committee for Ballarat chairman Janet Dore said a sub-hour journey for peak hour commuters was a reasonable expectation for a city less than 120 kilometres from Melbourne.

"Since the Regional Rail Link has gone in and the

huge growth to the west of Melbourne has been continuing we've found that we're having to service to metropolitan areas and not just country Victoria," Ms Dore said.

"We just can't accept that as a modern city we should not be having at least one sub-hour commuter train each way."

Achieving this first target by 2019 would involve running a train express from Ballarat Station to Southern Cross, bypassing Ballan and

Bacchus Marsh as well as the growth suburbs such as Melton and Caroline Springs.

However to ensure the 59-minute service becomes a frequent occurrence along the line, further investment from both state and federal governments will be needed.

While the state government is in the process of rolling out a \$518 million upgrade to the line, new infrastructure such as passing loops and duplication between Melton and Deer Park will focus on boosting

reliability. Committee for Ballarat is hoping to see an investment of a further \$500 million by 2025 for further duplication along the line, along with electrification to Melton by 2026 to meet the completion of the Melbourne Metro Rail Project.

While this has been listed as a priority by both Infrastructure Victoria and Australia, it's anticipated to cost \$1.2 billion.

Ms Dore said while CFB and the wider Ballarat community were grateful for the

government's investment in the 2016/17 budget, the city transport infrastructure was still well behind comparable countries such as England, France and Germany.

"We have to acknowledge we're playing catch up and the overall goal is for full duplication, and electrification has to be another medium term goal so we don't get clogged up servicing metropolitan Melbourne," Ms Dore said. "People will get sick spending 2.4 hours a day on a train and we can do better



DAILY COMMUTER: I.T professional Chris Zeegers is one of hundreds of Ballarat workers who travels to the Melbourne CBD with V/Line Monday to Friday. Picture: Kate Healy

## Professional cost for slow service

WHEN Chris Zeegers made the decision to move his young family back to Ballarat from Melbourne's suburbs, he knew there would be a cost.

Like hundreds of Ballarat professionals, the I.T worker is up before the sun to catch the 6.15am service to Southern Cross, spending 73 minutes on the train should things go to plan.

Despite not being required at work until 9am, the CBD worker tends to arrive in the city more than an hour early to avoid the risk of running late.

In the past two years V/Line has met its stated punctuality target of 92 per cent of services arriving within six minutes of their stated time just once, back in October 2016.

"During the 4.5 years I've been commuting I've only not claimed compensation (for poor performance) for three months," Mr Zeeger said. "I've got a six-year-old who's not up late so the later I am, the less time I can spend with her."

"There's obviously been regional growth through the corridor but these suburbs don't appear overnight there's a fair amount of planning that goes into it."

- BRENDAN WRIGLEY

# Ballarat leaders promote need for speed

NOEL DEMPSEY  
Visit Ballarat CEO

"If we have a sub-hour train trip we're no longer considered a regional town, we're a part of Melbourne, so it has got to put us on the map for more short term visitation. An hour journey is nothing."

DAVID WRIGHT  
Commerce Ballarat chairman

"It's another string in the bow of what Ballarat is trying to achieve. We have job and population growth and we need to have good transport linkages and we need to make sure the connectivity is fast and easily accessible."

DALE FRASER  
Ballarat Health Services CEO

"The movement of patients and staff via public transport will be highly beneficial to BHS moving into the future. Having a system where patients can come to Ballarat without private vehicles is of great assistance."

DARREN HOLLAND  
Fed Uni deputy vice-chancellor

"Many of our university students are dependent on public transport to access work and study. A higher frequency or faster rail service connecting Ballarat would be an attractive option to many students."

SAMANTHA MCLINTOSH  
Ballarat City mayor

"By advocating for a reliable 59 minute train service we will not only improve Ballarat's business competitiveness, but we will enhance the city's tourism, attract new residents, and improve the quality of life."

NICK GRYLEWICZ  
Integra land development

"Ballarat's such an attractive lifestyle destination but people are still drawn to the events of Melbourne so we can get a 59-minute train more people will choose to live in Ballarat for its relaxed lifestyle."

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