

NEWS | STATE BUDGET

Funding for tram track fix

\$1.2 million for lake line replacement

BY JACKSON RUSSELL

A STRETCH of nearly 120-year-old tram tracks will be replaced around Lake Wendouree in a \$1.2 million boon for the Ballarat Tramway Museum.

The 600-metre section of the tracks through the Ballarat Botanical Gardens was originally laid in 1905 and is in dire need of replacing, with their condition so poor that they are actually causing damage to the museum's 15-strong fleet of heritage trams.

The upgrades will support the more than 30,000 rides the Ballarat Tramway Museum completes every year and save valuable time and money for the museum and its volunteers that spend up to \$40,000 a year and thousands of hours maintaining the fleet.

With 300 metres of track replaced in 2019 and this new 600-metre section hoped to be completed by the end of the year, it leaves another 600 metres still to be replaced before the track restoration is complete.

Ballarat Tramway Museum president Paul Mong said the organisation had to

increase its workforce due to the additional maintenance needed on the trams.

"As they get older, the body work starts to move, it's starting to deteriorate and there's a lot more mechanical problems. At the moment, we have two trams out of action because of the condition of the track," he said. "The track condition is that poor of condition, if we don't do something in the next 12 months, we will not be able to operate."

Mr Mong said the museum had been advocating for a decade to get the track replaced. "It would be great to see our track replaced then we can start to talk about extending it. We're growing, we've been operating for 50 years now and we're really taking it to the next level," he said. "It is crucial. Without this track being replaced, we cannot operate so we'll just be a static display. One of the things that visitors enjoy is not only experiencing the trams but actually going for a ride on them."

The \$1.2 million project has been funded through the state government's Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund with the Ballarat Tramway



TRACKING: Ballarat Tramway Museum founding member Richard Gilbert with a section of the track to be replaced and a restored Geelong tram recently donated to the museum. **Picture:** Adam Trafford

Museum also contributing.

Member for Wendouree Juliana Addison said the project would create about 30 jobs. "These tram tracks were first laid down in 1905, and

they have served our community incredibly well, but they are in a state of disrepair and it's very important that urgent upgrades are made to keep our passengers safe

on our trams as well as protect our beautiful heritage trams," she said. "We know that our trams are very popular with over 30,000 rides on them per year, it's a real fea-

ture for our community and we want to do all we can to make sure that generations and generations to come get to enjoy the beautiful trams along Lake Wendouree."