

20 NATIONAL
23 VOLUNTEERING
CONFERENCE
THE FUTURE IS NOW

E1: Innovations across the nation

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY 2023

PETER ABBOTT – CEO PUFFING BILLY RAILWAY



PUFFING BILLY
RAILWAY BOARD

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

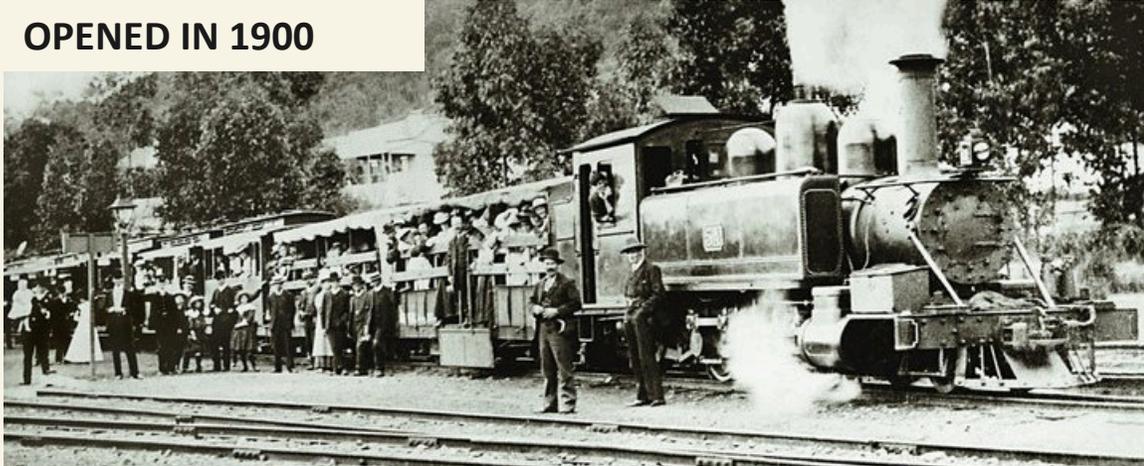
We acknowledge the Wurundjeri and Bunurong people as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which Puffing Billy Railway operates.

We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

I also acknowledge any first nations people here at the conference today

WHAT IS PUFFING BILLY?

OPENED IN 1900



NOT-FOR-PROFIT MAJOR TOURIST ATTRACTION



OVER 350 VOLUNTEERS + PBR GUILD
110 STAFF



PUFFING BILLY RAILWAY'S JOURNEY



UNIQUE SELLING POINTS

- Line Closed 1954 – Officially Re-Opened 1962
- Volunteer Preserved Railway – 2nd oldest Volunteer Preserved Railway in the World
- Dangling Legs From The Train – long cultural heritage
- Volunteer and Staff model
- Approaching 13million passengers since 1962
- Average 215,000p.a average – but biggest years the 3 years before COVID



SERIES OF CHALLENGES

BUS INCIDENT 2018

- **Legs dangling suspended**
- **20% drop in DOMESTIC trade – “loss of real PBR”**

OMBUDSMAN REPORT 2018

- **Organisational shock and response focus**
- **Loss of corporate skills and knowledge**

BUSHFIRES AUSTRALIA WIDE 19/20

- **Drop in trade**

COVID RESPONSE FEB 2020

- **Shutdown – Send Volunteers Away – Staff State Govt Support**
- **Resulting Loss Of Workforce – Volunteers**



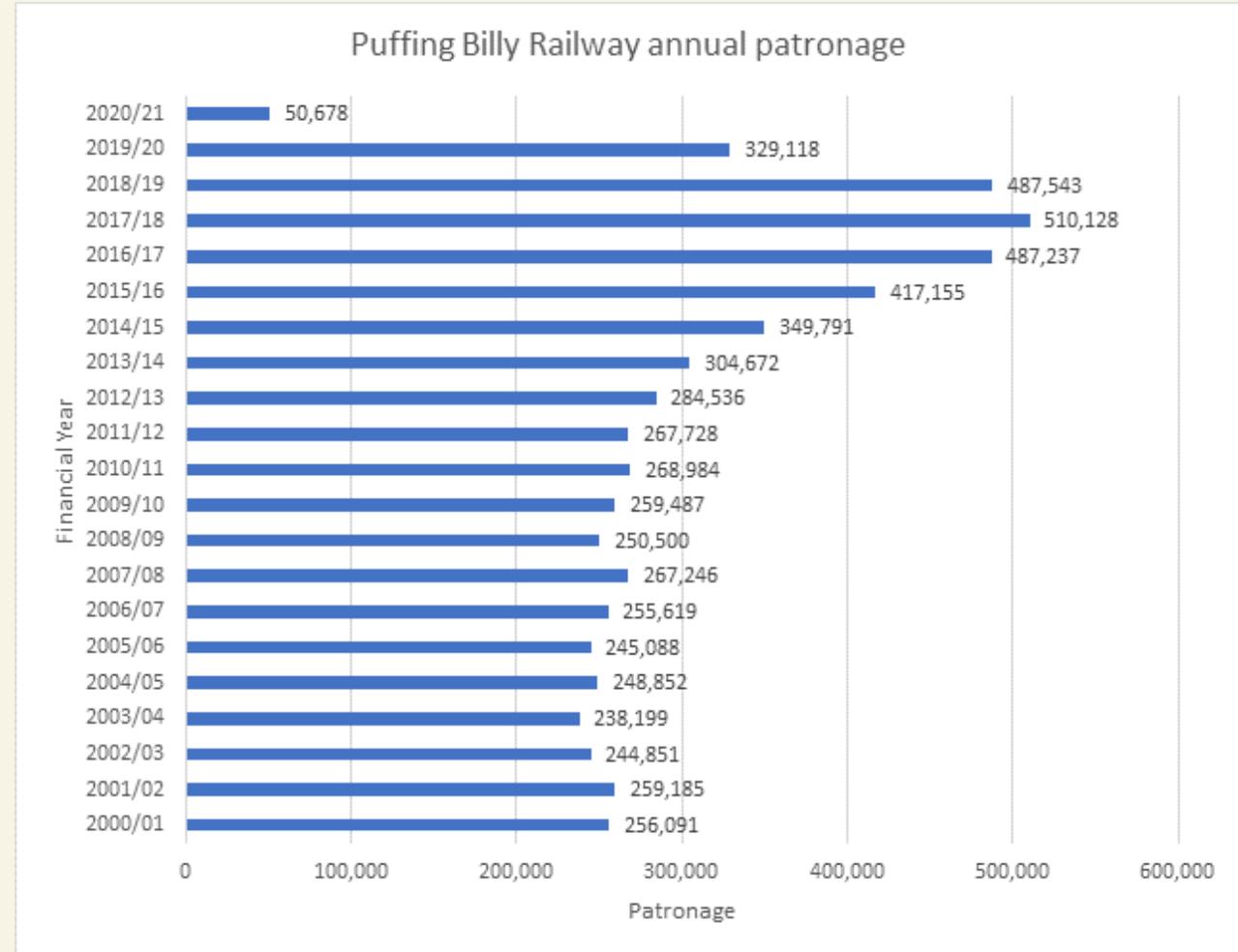
SUSTAINABLE RAILWAY?

PRE COVID –EXTREME GROWTH PASSENGERS

- **Tour group based**
- **Not sustainable for organisation – workforce, infrastructure, brand damage**

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

- **“Like herding cattle onto a truck”**
- **“Lack of passenger interaction”**
- **“Lost the fun and time to enjoy the day”**



PUFFING BILLY RAILWAY

A sustainable heritage railway

- **Workforce**
- **Heritage**
- **Infrastructure**
- **Finances**
- **Community**
- **Environment**



PUFFING BILLY RAILWAY ALL ABOARD PROJECT



ALL ABOARD PUFFING BILLY RAILWAY FUNDING

Partnering with Other Heritage Railways, AMES Australia and

Reconnect with Former Volunteers

- Formalised survey (telephone, mail, focus groups and online)

Survey CALD Volunteers across the Sector

- Strong focus on the experiences of these volunteers

New Materials – Website, Images, Videos

- Smooth path to volunteering, cultural awareness and marketing materials



RECONNECT WITH VOLUNTEERS

Dis-Connected Volunteers

- **65% would like to re-engage with PBRPR.**
- **25% were unsure and were predominantly older males (60% were in the 65+ age group).**
- **10% do not want to re-engage**



WHY DIS-CONNECTED

- 30.4% citing personal reasons – health and travel
- 17% unhappy with compliance burden

Others reasons

- No longer interested
- Admin and online difficult
- Expectations on volunteers
- COVID concerns – public role



CALD VOLUNTEERS

- PBR has 0.33%
- Local community (knox 25% - cardinia 18%)
- Note the opportunity!!

MOTIVATION FOR VOLUNTEERING

- Giving back to community
- Interest in steam trains
- Bring tremendous joy to wide eyed kids and kids at heart
- Help PBR develop further as a tourist attraction

PERSONAL ASPIRATIONS

- Improved communication skills
- Build social networks/make friends
- Gain work experience





WELCOMING PBR ORGANISATION

KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY

- What is the profile where you operate
- SBS website data series by local govt area

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF CALD SKILLS

- They have skills to bring already and builds confidence
- Develop easily accessible information about priority countries and cultures with key information, cultural etiquette and 'do's and don'ts' for existing team members

PROFILING THE SUCCESSES

- Imagery and video story
- Updated volunteer page
- Local partnerships – volunteer resource centres

CULTURAL AWARENESS TRAINING – ACROSS PBR

- 76 completed and materials available



UPDATED VOLUNTEER WEBSITE

Easier onboard and information source

Imagery to support language barriers

Set expectation of compliance requirements

Video Story Telling

The screenshot shows the Puffing Billy Railway website's volunteer application process. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Puffing Billy Railway logo and links for ABOUT, VISIT, EXPERIENCES, LAKESIDE VISITOR CENTRE, EDUCATION, EVENTS, VOLUNTEER, and CONTACT. Below this is a section titled "APPLICATION PROCESS" with three steps: 1. APPLY (with a pencil icon and a link to "Apply now in our online portal"), 2. ONBOARDING & E-LEARNING (with a laptop icon), and 3. START VOLUNTEERING! (with a smiley face icon). Below the application process is a section titled "UPCOMING ONLINE INFORMATION SESSIONS" with a countdown timer showing 06 Days, 06 Hours, 20 Minutes, and 25 Seconds. The session is scheduled for 5.00PM - 6.00PM on Thursday 2nd February 2023. Contact information for volunteering@pbr.org.au is provided, along with a note that future information sessions are held online on the first Thursday of every month from 5pm - 6pm.

The screenshot shows the Puffing Billy Railway website's volunteer roles page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Puffing Billy Railway logo and links for ABOUT, VISIT, EXPERIENCES, LAKESIDE VISITOR CENTRE, EDUCATION, EVENTS, VOLUNTEER, and CONTACT. Below this is a section titled "VOLUNTEER ROLES" with a sub-section for "ENTRY LEVEL ROLES". The entry level roles are: PASSENGER GUIDE, ENGINE CLEANER, EVENTS TEAM MEMBER, BOOKING CLERK, GARDENING TEAM MEMBER, ENVIRONMENT TEAM MEMBER, BUILDINGS TEAM MEMBER, WORKSHOP TEAM MEMBER, and EDUCATION GUIDE. Below the entry level roles is a section titled "PATHWAYS TO OTHER ROLES" with a sub-section for "Starting out in one of the roles above provides a pathway to undertake further training for the following roles". The pathways to other roles are: CONDUCTOR, STATION MASTER, GUARD / SIGNALMAN, TRACK PATROLLER, LOCOMOTIVE FIRESMAN, and LOCOMOTIVE DRIVER. Each role is accompanied by a small image of a volunteer in that role.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF

Puffing Billy Railway acknowledges the volunteers and staff that saved, preserved and continue to support Puffing Billy Railway for future generations to enjoy.



QUESTION TIME

Peter Abbott Chief Executive Officer

ceo@pbr.org.au

Adele Horkings – PBR Volunteer Program
Lead

volunteering@pbr.org.au