E1: Innovations across the nation
NATIONAL VOLUNTEER CONFERENCE
FEBRUARY 2023

PETER ABBOTT – CEO PUFFING BILLY RAILWAY
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-Open 1962
- Volunteer Preserved Railway – 2\textsuperscript{nd} 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 215,000 p.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
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
Easier onboard and information source

Imagery to support language barriers

Set expectation of compliance requirements

Video Story Telling
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.