

# Media Release



**RAIL FUTURES INSTITUTE Inc. A0059839B**

18 April, 2022

For Immediate Release

## **LET V/LINE BE A STAR PLAYER IN 2026 COMMONWEALTH GAMES SUCCESS**

Rail Futures Institute (RFI) congratulates the Victorian Government for securing the 2026 Commonwealth Games for regional Victoria. “We are unique in having a rail network linking Melbourne with each of these cities with the potential to provide the principal means of travel between these centres”, RFI’s President, John Hearsch said. “This is an opportunity to showcase not only Victoria’s major cities and tourist attractions, but also V/Line regional rail services. To underpin this, the Government needs to have a policy of strongly encouraging use of rail for regional travel during the Games period.”

Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo, the Latrobe Valley and possibly Shepparton will host competition in a multiplicity of competitive sports. RFI calls on the Government to ensure that V/Line becomes the key focus for getting Melbourne people to and from these centres, all of which are well served by passenger rail. Additionally, V/Line should also be promoted to country, interstate and overseas visitors as the preferred choice for travel to the regional centres.

Fortunately, parts of the V/Line infrastructure have been enhanced in recent years enabling services to be improved. Other infrastructure works are currently underway on the Geelong/Warrnambool, Shepparton and Gippsland lines. On the Bendigo line, partial restoration of double track beyond Kyneton will allow operation of higher frequency services to Bendigo, Swan Hill and Echuca. All of these works should be completed before 2026. However, more needs to be done, especially at Ballarat station where facilities need improvement including provision of full disabled access. Other stations likely to need improvement include Shepparton and Morwell. Fortunately, there is time between now and 2026 for these further enhancements to be fully implemented.

Nonetheless, for the period of the actual games, even with good advance planning, V/Line will be challenged to handle both its regular passenger task and the Games traffic. This highlights an ongoing need to increase the capacity of its existing rolling stock. This will be most efficiently and economically achieved by adding a fourth carriage to at least half of the 106 VLocity 3-car train sets that will be in service within the next year or two. By inserting a fourth carriage into existing 3-car consists, trains ranging from 3 to 9 cars can be operated, dramatically increasing train capacity. For example, Ballarat trains could be expanded from 6-cars with 444 seats to 8-cars with 624 seats – an increase of 40%. Approximately 12 of these additional carriages should also include a buffet facility for passengers on long distance services to Warrnambool, Swan Hill and Bairnsdale.

With an accelerated fleet acquisition program, V/Line should be well placed to handle the bulk of passenger travel requirements to and from the nominated regional centres.

Finally, the 2026 Games should be the catalyst to restore rail passenger services between Victoria’s two largest regional cities of Geelong and Ballarat which already jointly are home to over half a million Victorians, with that number to rise to around 800,000 by 2060.

Mr Hearsch concluded, “The Rail Futures Institute looks forward to working with the Government to ensure that V/Line makes a major contribution to the success of the 2026 Games.

**ENDS**

**Media Contact : John Hearsch - President**

**Mobile : 0419 736 816**

Rail Futures Institute Inc. is an independent non-partisan group formed to advocate cost effective rail and intermodal solutions for public transport and freight problems based on sound commercial, economic, environmental and social reasoning. Rail Futures members include experienced rail professionals, engineers, urban planners and economists.

PO Box 1257 Carlton Vic 3053

[railfutures.org.au](http://railfutures.org.au)

