

Huge increase in train travel

The number of passenger trips on Gippsland's V/Line services almost reached the two million mark in 2010-11.

V/Line's annual report reveals a total of 1.95 million trips were made, a huge increase over the past six years.

In 2005 Gippsland trains carried 820,000 passengers.

The 138 percent increase over the six-year period is attributed to reduced fares and an increase in the number of services including the re-introduction of passenger services to Bairnsdale.

For the 2010-11 year 1.475 million of the Gippsland lines trips were on services that ran between Traralgon and Melbourne and 475,000 on those that started or terminated at Bairnsdale.

V/Line now has 217 services running each week on the Gippsland line, 50 per cent more than the number that operated in 2005.

Fares are also lower than six years ago.

Current peak return fares are about 9 per cent below that charge for trips between Melbourne and stations to Trar-

algon and 36 percent cheaper for a return trip between Bairnsdale and the city.

Transport Minister Terry Mulder said the number of passenger trips on V/Line train services across the State for the past year was up 7.1 per cent on the previous year to a total of 13.5 million.

It was the 6th consecutive year of record growth and patronage records were broken every month during 20-11, he said.

Numbers of people travelling on V/Line buses also rose, by 1.3 percent to 1.2 million trips during the year.

Chief executive Rob Barnett said the result reflected new trains, more frequent services, upgraded stations and competitive pricing introduced in recent years.

"In 2005 our customers told us they wanted more frequent services and travelling comfort".

We have done that and train services are the preferred way of travel for tens of thousands of country and regional Victorians each day, Mr Barnett said.