

Rail campaign renewed

By Jane Ross

A GROUP of people in Lang Lang is trying to have the Cranbourne-Leongatha rail line reopened.

Its members have called a public meeting for Thursday April 28, at 7.30pm in the Lang Lang Memorial Hall.

Organiser Terry Bertalli said the aim of the meeting is to elect a committee to lobby relevant people and departments for the reopening of the passenger rail.

The line has had a long and chequered history. It was closed at

the end of the 1970s, reopened and closed again.

Steve Bracks promised to reopen it in 2004, together with a number of other railway lines in Victoria. A feasibility study was undertaken and the cost deemed too high. This was in part because the infrastructure had deteriorated because it was not maintained.

"If we don't have a go, nothing will happen" said Mr Bertalli, who runs a mobile food van out of Lang Lang.

He said in the past five or six years, the population of Lang Lang has ballooned.

"It's amazing."

And the traffic is worse.

"People would like the rail. Eventually, we'd like a rail link to Pakenham, but we don't want to push our luck too much."

Mr Bertalli told *The Star* people are happy with the bus service that provides public transport but it's not adequate.

"We want to get the train moving again. We've got a bit of interest."

He said given the huge cost of road works, he couldn't see that government complaints about funding the rail were valid.

"If we can get them to have a look at it, that would be a start."

Mr Bertalli believes that once a committee is formed and a website put up, support for the train will grow.

Leongatha's Max Semken is pleased about the meeting.

With the huge population growth in surrounding shires, he can see a time when a rail service linking South Gippsland with Melbourne will not only be necessary, it will be vital.

His argument is that the State Government cannot continue to press the regions to absorb bigger populations without the infrastructure to serve them.