



Nathaniel Smith MP
Member for Wollondilly

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RAIL LINE TO CONNECT TOURISTS WITH STEAM HERITAGE

The Wollondilly and Southern Highlands regions will receive a major tourism boost thanks to funding for the 32-kilometre Picton to Colo Vale Rail Line project from the NSW Government's \$3 Billion Infrastructure and Job Acceleration Fund.

Member for Wollondilly Nathaniel Smith said \$9.1 million will deliver a significant economic benefit for the community through a project that will support the continued success of the NSW Rail Museum.

"Based in Thirlmere and just an hour from Sydney, the NSW Rail Museum has long been a popular attraction for families and rail enthusiasts drawn to Australia's biggest collection of heritage trains."

Mr Smith said the project will upgrade the line between Picton and Buxton and reopen the section from Buxton to Colo Vale, allowing more heritage trains to operate from the Museum.

"Reopening the Loop Line to Colo Vale adds capacity, and the longer rail excursions will create a more authentic experience of what it was like to travel during the golden age of steam trains," Mr Smith said.

The upgrades include a stretch of track just north of Hill Top, currently inaccessible to the public and through the deepest railway cutting in the southern hemisphere.

"Big Hill Cutting will be the highlight of the Loop line when it is reopened, providing a unique experience that will draw and delight families and rail enthusiasts alike."

Mr Smith said work on the Picton - Colo Vale Rail Line will commence shortly.

The NSW Rail Museum is the largest tourist attraction in the Wollondilly region, and the upgrades are expected to support the recovery of an area devastated by the Black Summer fires and COVID-19.

"When this line was first built in the 1860s it brought the local villages to life and its reopening will do the same," Mr Smith said.

"There are plans for village market stalls to spring up along the line selling locally grown and made produce further adding to the visitor experience and providing a much-needed economic boost to local businesses."

Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional NSW John Barilaro said the \$3 Billion Infrastructure and Job Acceleration Fund was designed to deliver funding for projects with tangible benefits, just like the Picton to Colo Vale Rail Line.

"A key focus of the NSW Government's COVID-19 recovery blueprint is investment in infrastructure that will deliver economic stimulus and drive employment growth across the state," Mr Barilaro said.

“This is being achieved through the \$3 billion Infrastructure and Job Acceleration Fund, which invests in smaller, shovel-ready projects in every corner of the state and will put an extra 20,000 jobs back into the NSW workforce.”

Transport Heritage NSW CEO, Mr Andrew Moritz said the project is a game changer for the NSW Rail Museum and local region.

“This funding realises a long-held vision of our members, volunteers and the local community to see heritage trains operate the full length of the Loop Line and meet increased demand for our heritage train experiences.”

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