

**This leaflet concentrates on just one aspect of the scheme which makes no sense, the loss of reliability.**

There are many others. Most of them, however, can wait.

**The reliability question cannot wait.**

The line is about to be closed, and the second track is about to be ripped up. Once this happens, it will never be put back.

**One real problem is that the government gives conflicting answers to our questions.**

First they say that the design of the new trains is not too large for the infrastructure. Next they say that there have to be massive changes to the infrastructure to allow clearance for the new trains. What is the truth?

## WE MUST GET PROPER ANSWERS BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE

You can help. Please write to:

The Premier, Steve Bracks at Parliament House,  
and/or email him at [steve.bracks@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:steve.bracks@parliament.vic.gov.au)  
or contact the Minister for Transport, Peter Batchelor  
at [peter.batchelor@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:peter.batchelor@parliament.vic.gov.au)  
or contact your local state members of parliament.

<sup>3</sup> Future Updates will deal with other crucial issues, such as metropolitan congestion, timetabling, freight and gauge, heritage, regional connections and access, integrated ticketing (regional and metropolitan). These will be available soon on our website; email [ur015429@a1.com.au](mailto:ur015429@a1.com.au) for more details.

Compiled by The Better Rail Action Group (BRAG), established at a public meeting organized by Mount Alexander Shire Council on October 3, 2002. It represents a broad range of community groups including rail commuters, Latrobe University (Bendigo) Students Association, Castlemaine Business Association, Maldon Inc and the University of the Third Age.

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# Fast rail and you

FEBRUARY 2004 UPDATE FROM THE BETTER RAIL ACTION GROUP

In 1999 the government promised to spend a lot of money to improve train services on the Bendigo line. There was huge support.

Now they have started to deliver on their promise, but the cheering has stopped. Why? Because the government seem to have chosen a strange way of 'improving' the service.

What do you think is wrong with the present trains? What needs to be improved? Here's our checklist, based on discussion with a lot of rail users:

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Comfort:	OK.
Speed:	OK out in the country but very slow through the suburbs.
Reliability:	Would be OK except for delays generated in the suburbs.
Services:	Need for more frequent trains, and in particular an early service into Bendigo and a late night one from Melbourne.
Scheduling:	Need for a more predictable service, with regular departure times ('clockface' timetabling).

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How does this square with your opinion? So, if you had \$200 million to spend on Bendigo line services, what would you spend it on?

**The government's choice is to cut eight minutes off the non-stop time from Bendigo to Sydenham but to REDUCE the reliability of ALL services. Why? Read on.**

**The government decided that biggest need was for a non-stop 84-minute commuter train from Bendigo to Melbourne in the morning, and one back in the evening.**

Who really wanted this service? Not the people down the line, who will just watch it go by. Not the people who want to travel a bit later, or to get off before Melbourne.

**The government therefore called tenders for trains and track which would save eight minutes off the fast part of the journey, outside the suburbs.**

The contract did not specify that it should be done without losing the reliability of the existing tracks and services.

#### **What is 'reliability' Why does it matter?**

Reliability is the odds that your train will leave on time and arrive on time. Glitches will always happen (a driver arriving late for work, a mechanical fault, a delay in getting everybody on board). Reliability is a measure of the effect of a glitch: the time the system takes to recover from any given glitch.

**Reliability is probably the most important factor in ensuring that you are happy with your train service.**

**The government found that the cheapest way of saving eight minutes was to reduce the line past Kyneton to single track.**

Yes, the express can belt down it, and the others can all be kept out of its way. But ...

**Making the line single track reduces its reliability.**

Anybody who travels regularly on a single line knows this The reliability statistics for single lines prove it. And unreliability is infective: a delay at one end soon spreads to the whole line.

**The government says that the reliability is still 'acceptable'.** But why do we need to accept any reduction in reliability?

#### **Why is a single track less reliable?**

##### **On double track**

A glitch on one track will only affect trains on that track.

Services can generally be maintained despite a major glitch by single-line working over the other track.

Routine track maintenance can go on without closing the line.

The capacity of the line is maximised without loss of reliability. Extra trains are possible whenever there is a gap between services in that direction

##### **On single track**

A glitch on one track affects trains in both directions, as they have to wait for one another in passing loops

Any major glitch means the whole line is closed until the obstacle has been removed.

The whole line must close down whenever there is track maintenance.

Any increase in traffic reduces reliability still more, and is limited by the problem of finding paths which do not interfere with trains in the other direction.

**The government says that all that is needed is 'a more disciplined approach to operations'.**

Will this stop a driver from falling sick at the last moment?

**They say that the reduced reliability is 'acceptable'**

The government will close the line for six months and then run it with reliability which, they say, is 'acceptable to the stakeholders'. And what do they mean by 'stakeholders'? Not the passengers. They mean the contractors and operators!