

State deal guarantees service will stay for at least another three years

Ferry tales do come true

CLAIRE MARTIN

THE Portarlington ferry is here to stay but leaders are calling on the community to support the project to keep things sailing smoothly.

The State Government announced a deal on Monday morning that guarantees the ferry service to Melbourne's Docklands will run for at least the next three years, and outlined a new commuter schedule that starts today.

Port Phillip Ferries operations manager Murray Rance said it was down to the community to keep it going.

"We need commuters," he said.

"It's very simple, there's no science to it, you get people on board, people sitting on the seats and people experiencing it.

"We think there's wonderful tourism opportunities on this side of the bay and there's also the opportunity for people to go experience a show in Melbourne, have lunch and come back in a relaxed environment."

Member for Bellarine Lisa Neville said the next stage would be keeping the service viable and connecting it with tourism destinations.

"Now that the ferry is permanent, how do you make sure there's a bus there to wineries? Or one of the things they're looking at is whether



On board: Geoff Henderson, Murray Rance, Bellarine MP Lisa Neville and John Rae at the announcement. Picture: PETER RISTEVSKI

they can have bikes on board because we know the Bellarine rail trail is one of the most popular bike tracks around the state," she said.

"That's one of the focuses and now that we know it's per-

manent we can start doing that."

She said the funding was a modest amount but would keep the ferry secure.

"It's enough to enable the service to be sustainable really

... it needed to be able to be turned around so the Port Phillip (Ferries) group wasn't losing money and of course we're doing the \$15 million safe harbour project," she said.

Ms Neville's announce-

ment, made on board the ferry while it was docked at Portarlington pier, was met with cheers from locals.

"This ferry is now going to be permanent for at least three years," she said

"It can only continue to grow and be there for a very long time.

"It's going to be great for commuters. The timetable really reflects the experiences we've had in the trial as well as bringing tourists down here."

For an adult, a return ticket on the ferry will cost \$27; a concession will cost \$24; and an adult return pass, which includes 10 return tickets, is \$120.

The new schedule starts today and includes a 7am departure from Portarlington pier and 5.30pm from Victoria Harbour in Docklands for commuters.

FERRY TIMETABLE

Portarlington to Docklands:

Monday: 7am, 11.45am, 7.15pm

Tuesday & Thursday

7am, 3.30pm, 7.15pm

Wednesday & Friday

7am, 11.15am, 7.15pm

Saturday & Sunday

9am, 4pm, 7.30pm

Docklands to Portarlington:

Monday, Tuesday & Thursday

5.15am, 10am, 5.30pm

Wednesday & Friday

5.15am, 9.30am, 5.30pm

Saturday & Sunday

7.15am, 10.45am, 5.45pm

Times are subject to change — for updates and ticketing information visit the website at portphilipferries.com.au