Travellers Voice

November 2025 – April 2026 travellersaid.org.au

Expanding connections

This magazine is produced with the generous support of: V/Line

Travellers Aid

CEO Welcome

As we embrace summer's warmth and energy, I'm thrilled to share how Travellers Aid continues expanding its network of connection and support across Victoria, creating new pathways for independent travel and community participation.

Our geographic reach is growing significantly through valued partnerships. Following our successful launch of Melbourne Airport Assist earlier this year, we're now establishing new service hubs at Geelong Station and Parkville Station in Melbourne's medical precinct. These strategic locations join our existing network at Southern Cross, Flinders Street, Seymour and Ballarat stations, creating a comprehensive web of support points that help people get where they need to go with confidence and dignity.

Summer also brings our busiest events season. Whether you're heading to the Australian Open, Formula One Australian Grand Prix or attending other major events, our teams are ready to support you in making the most of our city's vibrant cultural life, regardless of mobility or access needs.

On 3 December we celebrated International Day of People with Disability. I particularly want to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of people who share their lived experience to drive positive change. Their input and expertise shape our service design, development and delivery. We are also grateful to our team of lived-experience facilitators who share insights that create better understanding through our popular Accessibility Awareness Workshops, including 'Travelling in the Shoes of Others'.

This growth – through new locations, expanded services and sector training – goes further still with the support of generous donors like you. By contributing to our Summer Appeal you'll be helping us establish these vital service hubs and equip them properly. Every donation helps us hire and train more staff, purchase mobility equipment and extend our reach to more Victorians.

Together, we're not just removing barriers to travel; we're opening doors to employment, healthcare, education, entertainment and community connection. Will you help us go further? Please consider supporting our Summer Appeal today.

Warm regards,

Elias Lebbos
CEO, Travellers Aid Australia

Regional connection makes big impact

When Marg Canny can't visit Seymour's supermarket without being recognised as 'the buggy lady', you know she's making an impact. As Travellers Aid's site supervisor at Seymour Station, Marg has become the friendly face helping regional travellers navigate their journeys with confidence for 11 years.

Seymour Station serves as a vital interchange where people arrive by coach, train and local transport before connecting to journeys across Victoria and interstate. What started as a community need has evolved into an essential service enabling independence for travellers of all abilities.

The service began during 2008-2011 track work, when the Australian Rail Track Corporation funded buggy assistance. When funding ended, the need remained. In 2014, Travellers Aid partnered with V/Line and Community Accessibility to reinstate the service, with Marg playing a key role in its establishment. Travellers Aid began direct delivery of the service from 2016.

Today, the service operates 2 shifts daily, providing buggy assistance and personal guidance between regional coaches, trains, buses, taxis and personal vehicles. But what Marg and her volunteer team provide goes deeper than transport assistance.

'The beauty of this role is that no two days are the same,' Marg says. 'We help people traverse the station, provide information and most importantly, give them the confidence to travel independently.'

Success lies in strong partnerships with V/Line and the local community, including Seymour Lions Club volunteers who've served since the beginning. Marg recalls helping a Shepparton woman visiting her sister in Melbourne, coordinating with the Southern Cross team for SkyBus assistance. The woman later wrote saying she now felt confident travelling, knowing support was available.

Call (03) 9654 2600 or email us at volunteers@travellersaid.org.au to find out how you can start making a difference as a Travellers Aid volunteer.

Growing service network takes you further

New service hubs at Melbourne Airport, Geelong Station and Parkville Station are designed to strengthen independent travel.

Travellers Aid is excited to expand its network of connection and support services with 3 new locations this year.

Building on our existing hubs at Southern Cross, Flinders Street, Seymour and Ballarat stations, our services are now available at Geelong Station and at the new Parkville Station within Melbourne's Metro Tunnel.

These additions follow the launch of our connection services as part of Melbourne Airport Assist earlier this year.

CEO Elias Lebbos says the growth is a strategic part of Travellers Aid's mission to assist people get where they need to go through an expanding network of support points across Victoria.

Travellers Aid had been providing a limited connection assistance service in Geelong for people attending the Archibald Prize exhibition at Geelong Gallery. Our permanent Geelong Railway Station service hub is now fully operational and operates from 8 am to 4 pm Monday to Friday. Available services include travel and public transport information, companion service and personal guidance.

'It's creating a web of touch points for people who want to travel independently, knowing that if there is something that creates discomfort or disturbs the travel, there's a service that can provide assistance and support along that journey,' Elias says.

Our new Parkville Station service hub offers valuable connection and companion support to people attending the precinct for medical appointments.

These additions represent an important and strategic service expansion designed to support independence and keep people connected to their communities.

It builds on Travellers Aid's established network, which includes Southern Cross Station – the heart of Melbourne's transport connections linking trains, trams, coaches and taxis – and Flinders Street Station, where personal care services enable people with disability to travel independently into Melbourne without bringing support workers.

Regional hubs at Seymour and Ballarat stations already provide vital connection assistance, including wheelchair support, personal guidance and help navigating between car parks, taxi ranks, local buses and V/Line coach services.

The recently added Melbourne Airport Assist service help travellers navigate from car parks or SkyBus through terminals to check-in, or from baggage collection back to transport connections. This addresses a critical gap for people who need support in the often-overwhelming airport environment.

Beyond fixed locations, Travellers Aid continues to provide support during public transport disruptions and major events including the Australian Open, Moomba and Formula One Australian Grand Prix. Our companion service helps people reach appointments or go shopping in the city, while mobility equipment hire means travellers don't need to bring their own.

These latest expansions reflect our commitment to enabling independence through practical support, so transport challenges don't become barriers to participation in work, health care, education or community life.

Events

Whether it's big sporting events like the Australian Open, cultural festivals like Moomba or international acts like Taylor Swift, Travellers Aid is there helping you get into the heart of the action.

Our team is again gearing up for a busy and vibrant event schedule and want to let you know about the support available.

Support can vary between events but includes:

- buggy connection from public transport and car parks
- on-site wheelchair assistance
- mobility equipment hire, including wheelchairs, motorised scooters and strollers
- personal care.

People regularly tell us how our services make an enormous difference to their ability to attend and navigate events. So, if you're uncertain of how we can assist you, please get in touch to find out more.

Scan the QR code to find events in Melbourne we help make accessable

Help us go further

As you've read in this newsletter, we are growing our network of support points to connect more people across Victoria. To do this effectively, we also need to hire and train more staff as well as buying more mobility equipment.

That's where your support makes all the difference.

Your donating to our Summer Appeal means we can create more full-service hubs in more places. It means we are ready and equipped to assist people to travel confidently and independently.

Will you help us?

Please donate today to be part of our exciting journey towards a more accessible and inclusive community.

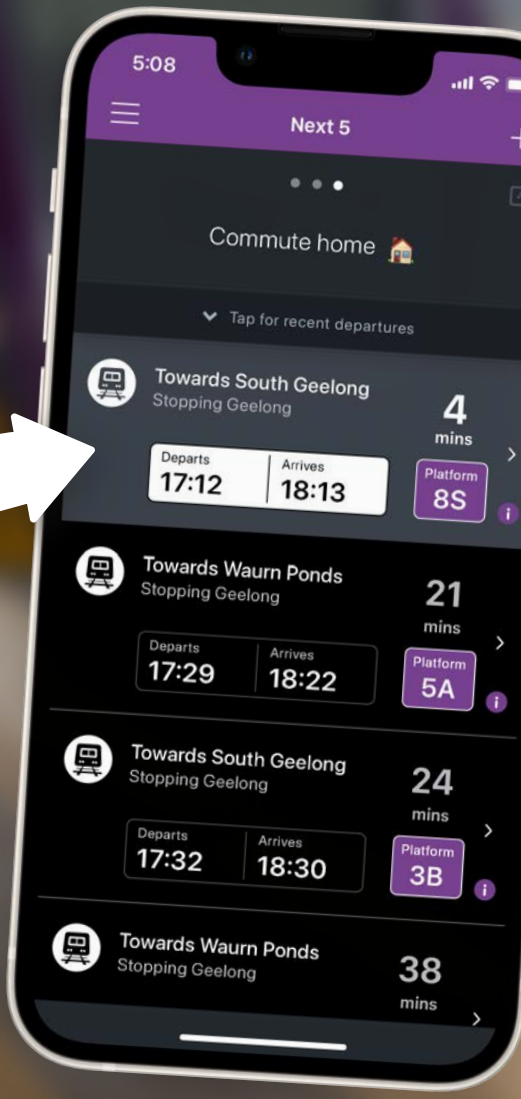
Our heartfelt thanks for the care and assistance we received at Geelong Sunday afternoon and Southern Cross when we arrived. This support makes getting about so much more pleasant and easier for us; both in our eighties and husband blind.

We used the Buggy Service on both days and can only say "what a great service!" To be honest we could not have travelled from and to the country by train if this service was not available. Thank you so much.

This is wonderful news to hear that Travellers Aid will continue at Melbourne Airport. In December 2024 we made use of this wonderful service to assist my husband. We found it invaluable.

Travellers Aid has enabled me to travel independently. They have been like guardian angels. They are so kind, respectful and professional. I never knew they existed until now. I've travelled from Cairns and was helped at the airport and now at Southern Cross.

HERE TO GET YOU THERE



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