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V/LINE TIMES

SWAN HILL TO MELBOURNE —
TRAIN SERVICES

MONDAY TO FRIDAY: Dep SH 6.54am dep Bgo 9.20am arr Melb 11.28am. Dep SH 1.35pm dep Bgo 3.59pm arr Melb 6.11pm. **SATURDAY:** Dep SH 6.54am dep Bgo 9.18am arr Melb 11.30am. Dep SH 1.35pm dep Bgo 3.59pm arr Melb 6.09pm. **SUNDAY:** Dep SH 6.54am dep Bgo 9.18am arr Melb 11.30am. Dep SH 4.36pm dep Bgo 7.02pm arr Melb 9.12pm.

SWAN HILL TO MELBOURNE —
COACH/TRAIN SERVICES

MONDAY TO FRIDAY: Dep SH 8.56am arr Bgo 12.11pm dep Bgo 12.26pm arr Melb 2.25pm. Dep SH 10.40am arr Bgo 12.57pm dep Bgo 1.26pm arr Melb 3.25pm. **FRIDAY ONLY:** Dep SH 3.50pm arr Bgo 6.45pm dep Bgo 7.01pm arr Melb 9.09pm. **SATURDAY:** Dep SH 9.40am arr Bgo 11.57am dep Bgo 12.26pm arr Melb 2.24pm. **SUNDAY:** Dep SH 12.50pm arr Bgo 3.07pm dep Bgo 3.26 pm arr Melb 5.24pm.

MELBOURNE TO SWAN HILL —
TRAIN SERVICES

MONDAY TO FRIDAY: Dep Melb 7.39am dep Bgo 10.00am arr SH 12.24pm. Dep Melb 6.08pm dep Bgo 8.21pm arr SH 10.50pm. **SATURDAY:** Dep Melb 7.40am dep Bgo 10.00am arr SH 12.24pm. Dep Melb 6.43pm dep Bgo 8.57pm arr SH 11.21pm. **SUNDAY:** Dep Melb 7.40am dep Bgo 10.00am arr SH 12.24pm. Dep Melb 6.43pm dep Bgo 8.57pm arr SH 11.21pm.

MELBOURNE TO SWAN HILL —
COACH/TRAIN SERVICES

MONDAY TO FRIDAY: Dep Melb 10.06am dep Bgo 12.17pm arr SH 2.35pm. Dep Melb 1.06pm dep Bgo 3.07pm (Mon, Wed, Fri ONLY) arr SH 6.17pm. Dep Melb 1.06pm dep Bgo 3.09pm (Tues ONLY) arr SH 6.14pm. Dep Melb 1.06pm dep Bgo 3.10pm (Thurs ONLY) arr SH 6.15pm. **FRIDAY ONLY:** Dep Melb 7.08pm dep Bgo 9.10pm arr SH 12.04am. **SATURDAY:** Dep Melb 10.06am dep Bgo 12.17pm arr SH 2.35pm. **SUNDAY:** Dep Melb 10.06am dep Bgo 12.17pm arr SH 2.35pm.

PLEASE NOTE: Trains are required to travel slower as a matter of safety on days with a temperature of 32 degrees or above. Passengers could be delayed for up to 20 minutes. Other delays can occur from time to time, please check vline.com.au or call 1800 800 007 for up to date information.

Walsh blasts rail service

Peter Bannan

MEMBER for Murray Plains Peter Walsh has taken the issue of the Melbourne-Swan Hill rail service to State Parliament, demanding urgent action over chronic delays, cancellations and the increasingly unreliable buffet car service.

Speaking in the Victorian Parliament on Thursday, Mr Walsh said frustration and anger were growing across the region as passengers continued to endure what he described as one of the state's poorest rail services.

"The people of the north-west deserve better than a second-rate service," Mr Walsh told Parliament.

He said the Swan Hill line, one of Victoria's longest regional rail journeys, had become "synonymous with unreliability, delays, cancellations and poor service standards".

"My constituents are rightly asking why they continue to receive what appears to be the worst rail service in Victoria," he said.

Mr Walsh said passengers were regularly left stranded, forced onto replacement coaches or subjected to significant delays, disrupting medical appointments, work commitments and family responsibilities.

A major concern raised by the MP was the inconsistent availability of buffet car services on the four-and-a-half to five-hour journey between Swan Hill and Melbourne.

"On a journey which can run for five hours, passengers should reasonably expect access to



Local MP Peter Walsh says frustration and anger was growing across the region as train passengers continue to endure what he described as one of the state's poorest rail services. Picture: Peter Bannan

food and refreshments," he said.

His comments followed concerns raised by regular Swan Hill rail passenger Grace Jones, who recently told this newspaper that travellers were often boarding trains expecting a full buffet service only to discover little or no food was available.

Ms Jones said her concerns were highlighted after a 75-year-old friend travelled back to Melbourne following a visit to Swan Hill during the King's Birthday long weekend.

"I didn't pack him any food because I thought he'd enjoy buying something from the

buffet," she said.

"But there was only limited service. They had drinks and some water, but no real food, and what little they had quickly sold out."

Mr Walsh told Parliament that no passenger should be expected to undertake such a lengthy journey without access to basic amenities.

"Instead they are regularly boarding trains only to discover no buffet service is available. This is simply unacceptable," he said.

"They deserve reliable trains, properly maintained rolling stock and certainty that a fundamental passenger service will be available."

Ms Jones had also raised concerns about dirty toilets, overflowing rubbish bins and overcrowding during rail replacement periods, while praising frontline V/Line staff for their professionalism.

Mr Walsh called on the Minister for Public and Active Transport and V/Line to urgently address reliability issues on the line and ensure buffet services were restored and consistently available.

V/Line previously said almost 91 per cent of Swan Hill line trains operated with a café bar during the past 12 months and that passengers were notified when services could not be provided.

The operator said passengers were also welcome to bring their own food and non-alcoholic drinks on board.

'Showbiz' as usual

Louis Harrison

DESPITE ongoing cost of living pressures, movie buffs are still purchasing memberships and tickets at local cinemas.

The flow-on effects from the fuel shortage earlier in the year and other cost of living strains mean many households have less disposable income at the end of the week after buying the necessities.

But director of Showbiz cinemas in Swan Hill, Andrew Taylor said unlike other industries, cinema attendance in Swan Hill hadn't been impacted by these financial pressures.

"We haven't really seen any sort of significant variation, we're probably a little bit different in that our business is very much content related, so when you've got the content people come. When you haven't, they don't come," he said.

In addition to current and upcoming releases like Toy Story 5, the live action Moana, Minions and Monsters, Supergirl, and Spiderman, Mr Taylor said Showbiz Cinemas have tried to provide incentives for customers to keep people coming through the door.

"We certainly have seen an uptick in our membership sign up, which makes sense, because that provides people with a discounted movie ticket all the time," he said.

"We've also expanded our discount Tuesday

promotion, where non-members are now receiving a fairly healthy discount on a Tuesday as well."

Audience engagement with current and prospective films come after indie-horror movies Obsession and Backrooms drew in young audience crowds in cinemas across the country.

Val Morgan, one of the leading Australian cinema advertising agencies reported "fear is fuelling young audiences".

"Horror continues to be cinema's fastest-growing genre, with admissions among 14-24 year old audiences up 68 per cent year on year," it noted.

While the next horror film, Ice Cream Man, isn't due for release until August, Mr Taylor said there's still plenty for families to enjoy as the school holidays approach.

"There's a wealth of choice, and we expect that, like all holidays, they'll be very busy," he said.

The support of the movie-goers comes after the cinema industry is bouncing back after facing hardship during the Covid pandemic and overseas writers strikes.

"The Australian cinema industry is going to finish about 10 per cent up on the previous financial year, and the May period was a record May, so it's all driven by content," Mr Taylor said.

Being a small business, Mr Taylor said on-



Liam Lochery is looking forward to increased patronage during the upcoming school holidays. Picture: Louis Harrison

going rises to operational costs have hit them, but they're able to monitor the situation.

"We tend to only use local suppliers where possible, and I've got to say, most of the local suppliers in the Swan Hill area have absorbed a lot of those costs for their regular customers," he said.

"We've got to be really super careful in terms of maintaining our margins, because we've got to survive as well, because cost of living is not just to the individuals, it's about businesses as well."

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