



MARY VALLEY  
RATTLER

ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2019/20



OUR GOAL IS TO CONTINUALLY IMPROVE ON OUR GREAT GUEST EXPERIENCE, WHILST REMAINING ONE OF THE BENCHMARKED RAIL SAFETY ORGANISATIONS IN THE TOURISM AND HERITAGE RAILWAY INDUSTRY.

**MARY VALLEY RATTLER**

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ABN: 89 168 604 975  
ACN: 168604975  
The Rattler Railway Company Ltd.  
Trading as: Mary Valley Rattler



**DAYS OF OPERATION**  
OPEN EVERYDAY  
*Except Christmas Day*



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*"The Rattler is the vehicle to share the history, heritage, stories and beauty of our region with the many guests who come from far and wide for a unique tourism experience."*

**KAREN DAVIS**  
Sales & Marketing Manager

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

In last years report I remarked that 2018-19 was a landmark year. A year with nine months of rail operation and the integration of all services with income from rail, Café, retail, sponsorships and other partners. The year also on reflection as the first year of operation built a strong base and a resilient team well capable to manage the experiences encountered in 2019-20.

2019-20 is a year of contrasts. Exceeding plans for growth and profit in the first four months, then managing through the slow down over the devastating fire season, and the closure due to the Covid pandemic.

Mike Green and his management team managed the challenges and returned an operating profit in our second year of operationn.

The year started strongly with close to an average of 1,000 rail customers a week from July-October. Special events including the DeguSTATION Train. The Double Steam Day in August, The First Birthday Celebration and Trick or Treat Train as well as regular patronage resulted in the strong numbers. The All Stations Train was introduced welcoming back a stop at Dagun Station in September. These signature events generated strong media coverage and set the platform for the introduction of the now popular Tasting Train and other special events over the summer.

The publicity including TV, Press and Radio around these events that was externally funded generated bookings for the Rattler and exposure to the Gympie region.



High levels of customer satisfaction continued to be highlighted in our surveys and on social media. On behalf of the Board I would like to acknowledge this high level of customer response is due to the passion and dedication of our team and in particular the Mary Valley Rattler Volunteers.

This passion and professionalism was recognised at the Annual Queensland Tourism Awards where the MVR was the Silver Medalist as a new tourism venture.

The Board would like to acknowledge the resilience and capacity of the team that enabled the business to work through the fire season with reduced services and rebound with events and increased business in December and January.

This resistance and capacity was further tested with the forced closedown 23 March caused by the Covid pandemic. The Covid plan strategy developed provided for

## BOARD MEMBERS

2019/2020 VOLUNTARY BOARD MEMBERS



IAN  
MCNICOL



ADRIAN  
HURLEY



GARRY  
DAVISON



LEN  
SIVYER



MARK  
POYNTER



the maintenance of essential services and path to profit in 2020-21. With priority on with safety, maintenance, staff and volunteer welfare. This plan was implemented with reduced costs and clear communication with our customers, partners and suppliers. It is important to acknowledge the efforts of the management team that allocated days of unpaid time while the Covid recovery plan developed. To further acknowledge the outstanding achievements for the full year in maintaining the operation to have a platform for the future.

I would like to thank my Board colleagues for their commitment to the business and the moral support of the team outside the Board meetings in what has been a challenging and rewarding year.

I would also like to also recognise the support of the Gympie Regional Council, other key partners and the dedicated customers that agreed to defer rather than cancel their bookings.

While the focus at year end was on Covid recovery and developing a robust plan for 2020-21 it is important to recognise that the Company ended the financial year with a surplus and stronger balance sheet as reflected in the accounts.

While acknowledging that this is the annual report for the 2019-2020 year at the time of writing it is important

to note that the product innovations and cost savings included in the Covid recovery plan have ensured a profitable first quarter of 2020-21. Strong forward


bookings to year end indicate that we will continue to maintain high levels of utilised capacity within social distancing regulations. These include increased prices, introduction of a premium product, integrated services across the business allowing higher productivity and reduced costs.

The Board continues discussions with key stakeholders including the Gympie Regional Council to explore opportunities for the sustainability of the business and improvement of the return on the investment.



**IAN MCNICOL**

Chairman of the Board



*"THE YEAR STARTED STRONGLY WITH CLOSE TO AN AVERAGE OF 1,000 RAIL CUSTOMERS A WEEK FROM JULY-OCTOBER."*

**IAN MCNICOL**  
Chairman of the Board

**GYMPIE**

# WHO WE ARE

## *A Brief Introduction & Our History*

The Mary Valley Rattler (MVR) commenced operations in October 2018, and is situated in the small regional town of Gympie (population 21,000) approximately 79km north of the Sunshine Coast and 170km north of Brisbane. Commencing at the historic Gympie Station, guests are treated to an enchanting and informative half-day rail journey on board a heritage fleet of locomotives



and carriages. Over the rolling hills of stunning Queensland countryside, and through small country communities nestled along the line, the Mary Valley Rattler experience is a delight for visitors and locals alike.

This heritage rail experience is run as not-for-profit. The organisation is administered by a voluntary board and operates with assistance from a large group of volunteers.

Historically, the Mary Valley Heritage Railway Museum Inc., a rail enthusiast

operation, was operating on the line from Gympie to Imbil. In 2012 the Safety Regulator closed the operation due to not being able to demonstrate a confirmed forward investment in rail infrastructure following two minor derailments. Since then, community partners maintained discussions with the Queensland Government to re-establish a historic rail operation.

In 2013, the Deputy Premier committed funding to support a study to review potential business opportunities and refurbish the track and rollingstock. The outcome of a feasibility study was to initiate works to open a new tourism focused product operating from Gympie to Amamoor return. Five years later, the Mary Valley Rattler was born, providing a unique and key attraction for Gympie and wider region.

The Mary Valley Rattler works collaboratively with industry, community, government and private enterprise to drive additional economic benefit to the Gympie region by bringing more travellers to the region and encouraging longer stays. Working with events, tourism operations and museums we aim to develop a strong heritage brand for Gympie ensuring the preservation of local history and to share that with visitors, educational institutions and rail enthusiasts.

From July 01 2019 to June 30 2020, 24,027 guests have travelled with the Mary Valley Rattler. Being named finalist in tourism awards and taking out the Silver Award for Queensland in the New Tourism Product is testament to the hard work and passion of the dedicated team.



# VISION & VALUES

## MARY VALLEY RATTLER

*The success of the Mary Valley Rattler since commencement of operations in 2018 is testament to the appetite for an authentic heritage rail experience. The Mary Valley provides a stunning backdrop for the region showcasing the natural beauty, fertile lands and historical and friendly townships. The feedback to date heroes the volunteers that share stories with the many guests on board and the locals from the communities that they meet on their journey. This collaborative and genuine approach delivers a unique tourism experience that guests from far and wide are enjoying.*

HIGH TOURISM  
EXPERIENCE

GROWTH &  
SUSTAINABILITY

SAFETY &  
RISK

### VISION

To establish an award winning and sustainable Heritage and Tourism rail business for the benefit of the Gympie and Mary Valley communities.

### MISSION STATEMENT

Establish and maintain a sustainable business through a dedicated team of managers, staff, volunteers & advisors.

MARKETING

GOVERNANCE

PEOPLE &  
CULTURE

PARTNERSHIPS

# BRINGING NEW PRODUCTS TO LIFE

## *At the Mary Valley Rattler*

To continue to achieve excellence, we must improve processes and products with an exceptional guest experience delivery always the priority.

During the unprecedented challenges of the past year, which included a period of closure due to Covid19, a pivot of the business model was undertaken to ensure we were meeting customer needs and improving the yield at the same time. The First Class Club Car experience delivery was elevated with more inclusions. Priority boarding, a meet and greet with the drivers, local newspapers included and linen tablecloths and napkins and new tub chairs enhanced the experience and this product is generally fully subscribed on each service.

A bundled package option was added to allow booking ease for passengers. The Premium product, inclusive of on an board morning treat and lunch at the historic Gympie Station has been very popular. A trolley service was also introduced to provide on board catering options.

The Tasting Train was launched to support the local producers and highlight the region's reputation as one of Australia's most prodigious food bowls. The media coverage of this service including a segment on The Great South East has seen the success of this product flourish.

Partnerships with coach operators and accommodation providers were developed. Several event trains over the year ran to full capacity with The Love Train and The DeguSTATION Train bringing overnight visitors into the region for the weekend, and receiving positive and widespread media interest.





# OUR STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

*"At end of last financial year, there were 90 volunteers on the books, and 17 Full Time equivalent staff employed by the RRC."*

The Mary Valley Rattler Volunteer Team consists of a passionate group of individuals, dedicated to preserving and sharing heritage rail experiences as well as the history of our beautiful region. We could not have achieved what we have so far without our incredible volunteer family. Endless compliments and raving praises fill our consumer reviews, both online and in person, and we are very proud of the work the volunteers accomplish on a daily basis.

The volunteer team have developed a highly polished guest experience with a genuine country charm, and unwavering friendliness.

At the Mary Valley Rattler, we have created several voluntary roles that include On-board Guest Experience Attendants, Rail Safety Workers, Tour Desk Attendants, Administration Volunteers, Gardeners and more.

As ambassadors for the region, their role is to ensure that every guest to the Mary Valley Rattler has a safe, authentic, informed and exceptional tourism experience.

*'We have a small but energetic team of motivated employees, all contributing their personal best to the operation of this business.'*

**MIKE GREEN**

*"The passion and varied skills of the volunteers is what drives the Rattler from the workshop to the on board attendants, the guest reviews are testament to this valued team."*

**PHILLIP SHAW**  
Asset Manager



# GENERAL MANAGER STATEMENT



The Mary Valley Rattler brand continues to grow from strength to strength. The brand has been seen on Sunrise, The Great Day Out and Queensland Weekender. The Mary Valley Rattler is the number one attraction in Gympie according to Trip Advisor.

Since commencement of operations in October of 2018, we have welcomed over 50,000 guests to the Mary Valley Rattler. During 2019 a customer survey was conducted with 94% of the respondents stating that the experience was value for money. The primary goal of the Mary Valley Rattler is to stimulate tourism for the region, this objective is being validated with 72% of the surveyed respondents stating that the reason they travelled to Gympie was to visit the Mary Valley Rattler.

## ABOUT MIKE GREEN

*Micheal is the proud father of 5 young children who lives in the Wide Bay region. His wife Alichia is a Registered Nurse and works in Intensive Care. Mike holds a Bachelor of Business with majors in Accounting & Finance, as well as a post-graduate Diploma in Management.*

Mike is a proud lifetime member of the Golden Keys Honour Society in recognition of his academic achievements. He has been in the rail industry for more than 40 years, with experience in urban and freight railways across five states. He is proud to be a member of the Rattler family.

## IMPACT OF BUSH FIRES & COVID 19 PANDEMIC

The Bushfire Crisis and Covid-19 pandemic severely impacted business operations during 2019/20. The business closed down in March due to Covid-19 restrictions, with the first steam operations recommencing on Saturday the 11th of July, 2020.

## OTHER INITIATIVES

We have developed new products during the 2019/20 financial year, including the Footplate Friends experience, premium services, the Tasting Train, and we introduced Steam Man to the public.

I am proud to be a member of the Rattler family - this community is awesome!

At the end of June 2020 and as the Covid-19 restrictions are being lifted, I can say that at the Rattler 'We are on our way!'... again!

**MICHEAL GREEN**

General Manager





# MANAGEMENT TEAM

At the Mary Valley Rattler, our team consists of multiple volunteers, part time workers, full time workers, and of course our management team. Below outlines the positions and roles of our Management Staff, who oversee the entirety of the Mary Valley Rattler.



**Micheal Green**  
**GENERAL MANAGER**

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Responsible to deliver the Strategic and Tactical Plans approved by the Board of Directors.



**Julia Avis**  
**STATION OPERATIONS  
MANAGER**

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Responsible for Guest Experience and Rail Safety Compliance.



**Karen Davis**  
**SALES, MARKETING &  
PARTNERSHIPS MANAGER**

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Covers all business marketing strategies, product delivery, collateral & company outreach. Responsible for Brand development.



**Phillip Shaw**  
**ASSET MANAGER**

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Responsible for the long term sustainability of the asset. Development and delivery of the Asset Management Plan, and workshop management.



**Sue White**  
**BUSINESS SUPPORT  
MANAGER**

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Responsible for HR and Financial compliance.

# STATION OPERATIONS & SAFETY

**The Ratter Railway Company Limited (RRC)** is proud to be an industry leader in rail safety and compliance. We have developed a benchmark which is now shared with others through our membership with the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator (ONRSR) tourist and heritage safety improvement committee.

The RRC is an accredited rail transport operator in Queensland, holding both rolling stock operator and rail infrastructure manager accreditation. This accreditation was effective from 1st July 2017 with a variation for passenger operations granted in August 2018.

The focus of the business remains on securing sustainable funding channels, ongoing development of strategic business plans and management of the safety management system.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

The primary rail safety risks identified in the RRC's operations include derailments, level crossing incidents and proceed authority exceedance occurrences. Other safety incidents can include work health and safety incidents which are reportable to Work Health and Safety Queensland.

Rail safety performance at the RRC is measured by examining its performance against these key risks and implementing programs to eliminate or mitigate them.

Due diligence oversight of the entity continues to be performed by the RRC Management Committee (MC) including General Manager Micheal Green, Asset Manager Phillip Shaw, Sales & Marketing Manager Karen Davis and Station Operations Manager Julia Avis.

RRC operated at all times within the guidelines of our safety accreditation and maintained rollingstock as per the Safety Management System even during business shutdown.



## ***DESCRIPTION AND ASSESSMENT OF SAFETY PERFORMANCE FOR THE REPORTING PERIOD***

The RRC Key Safety Performance Indicators for non-rail-based incidents are reported around three indicators;

- Lost Time Injuries
- Medically Treated Injuries
- First Aid Injuries

While RRC is committed to reporting of key safety performance indicators we are taking a holistic view to safety moving forward. Key assessments criteria will be added focusing on consultation and collaboration with staff volunteers and passengers.

The RRC recognises that the nature of our operations can result in a variety of incidents. We are confident we have “reasonably practicable” processes in place to avert these incidents, however have developed our reporting, audit, investigation and review processes accordingly.

## ***SAFETY INITIATIVES IN THE REPORTING PERIOD***

The following significant safety initiatives have been undertaken:

- Review of the RRC Risk Register – June 2020
- Further development of the RRC SMS including:
  - Contractor Evaluation Checklist
  - Blue card policy
  - Rollingstock Maintenance Manual updates
  - Civil Infrastructure Maintenance Manual updates
  - Incident Notification and Reporting
  - Safeworking Manual updates
  - Rail training manual updates to reflect operational audits.
  - Training Schedule and Plan updates
  - Emergency Management Plan updates
- Safety improvements within the RRCs’ Chapple Street Gympie Workshop and Workshop Compound including lock out and tag, bunded storage for liquids, and chemical storage area.
- Business audit schedule including 6 month safety audits of workshop, café and train services. Additional audits on safety procedures on operational days.

- External audits of 1st aid, defibrillators and work at heights equipment.
- Continued compliance with rail safety worker medical requirements.
- Training and Assessment processes for workers, volunteers and contractors
- Formal training, assessment and HRW (High Risk Work) license records
- RRC induction and SARC training/assessment for all workers who access the rail corridor
- Completion of additional competencies for staff including machinery tickets, Chemical certification, work at heights and chainsaw competencies.
- Compliance with drug and alcohol management plan. Increased testing across the business.

## ***SAFETY INITIATIVES PROPOSED FOR THE NEXT REPORTING PERIOD***

The June 2019 – June 2020 reporting period saw a significant change in safety culture with the rollout of Operation Orange. The plan centres around continuous improvement within all areas of the business. It has a consultative approach involving volunteers and staff. This includes:

- Regulatory compliance with plant, high risk workshop activities and machinery.
- The formation of the safety committee to implement continuous change.
- Focus groups and feedback to gain volunteer and customer safety feedback.
- Training and assessment of operational personnel including traincrew, track vehicle operators and station staff.
- Professional development and team building to enhance safety culture and commitment.
- Continued membership to the ONRSR tourist and heritage safety improvement committee working towards a shared best practice within the industry.

To permit these activities, the RRC has:

- Consult the Safety Regulator (ONRSR) to ensure current and future accreditation requirements are met
- Participate in external audits and inspections and arrange/conduct internal audits and inspections
- Enhance the RRC SMS to include:
  - High risk work permits compliance
  - Complete a full document control audit process of the SMS



## ***SAFETY ADVISORY TEAM***

RRC has continued to use experienced industry experts to further develop our SMS in accordance with legislative requirements. The safety advisory team is used in an as needed basis to assist with documentation and provide advice.

The RRC SMS is considered as containing “living documents” wherein the outcomes of audits, inspections as well as changes to legislation and enhanced rail safety practices will be considered and reflected as appropriate.

Those forming part of the safety advisory team of the RRC include:

- Ken McHugh – Principal Accreditation Advisor with a major railway company
- Jerry Jirasek – Mechanical Engineer and General Manager of a major rollingstock manufacturer
- Julia Avis – Bachelor of Business and qualifications in Training/Assessment and Occupational Health and Safety. 15 years with QFES specialising in emergency management and risk reduction.
- Adrian Hurley – Principle Operations Specialist with a major railway company (train operations and safety management background)

## ***THE REVIEW PROCESS AND CONSULTATION***

Review of the RRC SMS follows on from formal review of the RRC Risk Register considering the dynamic and changing environment this financial year. Specific documents have been reviewed by persons responsible for the ongoing management of the SMS as well as content experts and workers who will perform specific tasks.

***“We are proud to have a culture of best practice safety while maintaining the ultimate guest experience.”***

**JULIA AVIS**

*HR Business Support & Safety Manager*

## FOOD & BEVERAGE

*'Delivering an exceptional guest experience including our food and beverage offerings drives us to continue to innovate and deliver our signature products'*

**JULIA AVIS**  
Station Operations Manager



The Rusty Rails cafe took a new direction in 2020. Focusing on fresh home-cooked meals, salads, scones and cakes. While continuing to compliment the current rail services the product was adapted to encourage locals. The rebranding was aimed at providing a more complimentary synergy with the current Mary Valley Rattler branding and focused on the historic nature of the refreshment rooms. Decor was adapted using historic rail items from Gympie station and was restored using volunteer labour.

The current cafe can adapt to provide functions for up to 200 people, weddings, seating for up to five large individual groups and can cater for train capacity of 400. The station space also allows multiple events to happen concurrently increasing the options into the next financial year.

The COVID shutdown allowed for the cafe to focus on menu, restyling and procedural changes. The cafe is operating within a current COVID industry plan and has complied with all government requirements with social distancing, checklists and retention of diners details. Changes to COVID restrictions were implemented immediately. All staff have completed COVID safe training. Signage and cleaning regimes focus on maintaining a safe environment for staff and customers.

2019/2020 saw a number of internal and external audits completed. No non-conformances were recorded across food safety with audits completed through Gympie Regional Council, Queensland Health (COVID Conformance) and internal audit processes. Internal focuses included allergen training, Responsible service of alcohol and food safety competencies.

It's all about the coffee! This year saw the introduction of the Rattler Railway Company Coffee. The coffee was sourced from a local Sunshine Coast Company with a focus on the smooth blend to suit varied tastes. The coffee is fair trade which continues to support small farmers with fair prices for their beans. The branding of the coffee aligned with the company ethos and included both 500g and 1kg retail bags to sell in the gift shop. The coffee has been rolled out at both Gympie and Amamoor station with plans to expand further in the next financial year.

Rail products are complimented by food and beverage offerings to maximise revenue and streamline the cafe process. Pre ordered food through the initial booking process has given customers greater options for take on board food.

The introduction of on board trolley service selling beverages has also ensured we are maximising train revenue while offering all passengers access to drinks. On board catering, pre ordered food and trolley services will expand in the next financial year.

Menus have been developed to focus on seasonal produce, fresh local ingredients and the use of local suppliers. A mix of local small farmers, boutique food producers and larger suppliers were used to ensure cost of goods remained sustainable while still supporting the local suppliers. The overall changes through to the end of the financial year will ensure the cafe remains a sustainable part of the Rattler Railway Company Limited.







RATTLER RAILWAY COMPANY LTD.

"OUR GOAL IS TO BE THE  
HERITAGE HUB FOR  
RAIL."

**MICHEAL GREEN**  
*General Manager*



## OUR COMMUNITY ASSETS

RATTLER RAILWAY COMPANY LTD.

We currently have three agreements with Gympie Regional Council (GRC) that highlights our responsibility to deliver sustainable safe assets. During the 19/20 financial year, RRC & GRC negotiated minor asset transfers, infrastructure delivery schedules & asset maintenance schedules.

These variations to the lease agreements were signed off by both parties in the first half of the 19/20 financial year. We hold a skilled workforce that on a daily basis inspects, maintains and refurbishes the asset base on behalf of the heritage community. We are proud to be the custodians of these assets.

During our second year of operation, we reviewed our asset management plan that takes a long term, life cycle view of the assets.

The diagrams below indicate that the percentage of spend against each asset group, and the funding mechanisms to fund the capital works program.

### *Capital Works Expenditure – Long Term Sustainability of Assets*

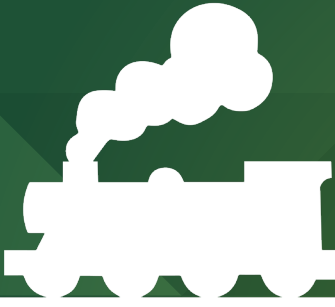
CAPITAL SPEND AGAINST ASSET CLASS



■ Sleepers ■ Buildings ■ Rollingstock



# 2019/2020 RATTLER REVIEW



**21,246**  
VOLUNTEER HOURS

**26,381**  
NUMBER  
OF GUESTS

**UP TO 23**  
FULL TIME EMPLOYEES  
OVER THE YEAR

**\$40.46**  
TRAIN YIELD  
PER  
PASSENGER

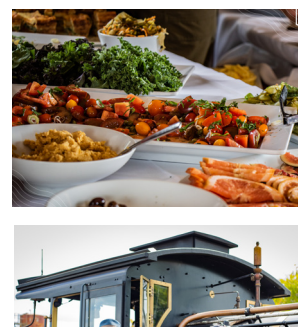
**\$61.51**  
OVERALL YIELD

**4 MONTHS**  
COVID  
SHUTDOWN





# OUR YEAR AT A GLANCE



"We had a wonderful day riding on the Rattler. It took us back to our childhood when that was our main source of travel. The staff are courteous, and full of local knowledge. Thank you!"

Dee | TripAdvisor



# MARY VALLEY RATTLER 2019/20



*"Wonderful day out with the family - our carriage was lucky enough to have the youngest volunteer on the team keeping us informed - only in year 11 - inspiring! Beautiful countryside and a fabulous journey!"*

Leith | Facebook

## INDUSTRY PARTNERS



## GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



Queensland Government



## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

*Gympie Motor Group*

*Energy Skills Queensland | SkillsCentred QLD. | Madill Holden | Lions Club*

*Volunteering Sunshine Coast | Volunteering Gympie | Bernard Petroleum*

*Dagun Community Group | Friends of Amamoor | Rotary Club of Gympie*

## SUCCESSFUL GRANT SUBMISSIONS

*Cancer Council QLD Grant*

*Gympie and District Community Bendigo Bank Grant*

*Gambling Community Benefit Funds*



## ACHIEVEMENTS, AWARDS & NOMINATIONS



Ranked Number 1  
Attraction for the  
Gympie Region on  
TripAdvisor



Finalists in the  
Gympie Chamber of  
Commerce Tourism  
Award



**GREY NOMAD  
AWARDS**

Finalists in the Grey  
Nomad Tourism  
Attraction Award



**QUEENSLAND  
TOURISM INDUSTRY  
COUNCIL**

QTIC Awards Participants  
for New Tourism Business &  
Contribution by a Volunteer  
Group

**AWARDED SILVER IN NEW  
TOURISM BUSINESS**

## KEY EVENTS & MILESTONES



**DOUBLE STEAM DAY**  
31ST AUGUST, 2019



**967 DOCUMENTARY  
COCKTAIL EVENING**  
5TH OCTOBER, 2019



**MVR'S 1ST BIRTHDAY**  
6TH OCTOBER, 2019



**INAUGURAL  
HALLOWEEN TRAIN**  
31ST OCTOBER, 2019



**TASTING TRAIN  
LAUNCH**  
12TH NOVEMBER, 2019



**AUSSIE EXPRESS TRAIN**  
AUSTRALIA DAY, 2020



**THE LOVE TRAIN**  
VALENTINE'S DAY  
FEBRUARY, 2020



**THE  
DEGUSTATION TRAIN**  
8TH AUGUST, 2019



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The Rattler Railway Company Ltd.  
Trading as: Mary Valley Rattler

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