

V'Locities In Service!!!

Thursday 22nd December 2005 - Trip Report By Matt Julian

Thursday 22nd December 2005 saw the reopening of the Ballarat line after extensive Regional Fast Rail (RFR) works, and as a bonus to Ballarat line passengers, the launch of V/Lines new V'Locity 160 DMU's into revenue passenger service, after 18 months of testing and training.

Making the early trip up from home (Moe, 132km from Melbourne on the Traralgon line) on the 5:26 sprinters to Flinders Street, my service was on time into Flinders Street and I soon found a spark to catch across to Southern Cross (formerly Spencer Street)

From here, I was headed for Platform 6 - the place to be for the 0805 departure to Ballarat!!!

7010+7015 made up the train, and after docking late at 0803, the train left three minutes late at 0808.

TRAIN 8103 - 0805 Southern Cross - Ballarat Service

Consist: Sprinters 7010+7015



7010 after arrival into Ballarat.

Southern Cross	0808
Footscray	0816/16
Sunshine	0822/23
Deer Park	0827/27
Ardeer	0830/31
Melton	0841/42
Bacchus Marsh	0854/55
Ballan	0914/15
Ballarat	0944

Unscheduled stops at Footscray, Deer Park & Ardeer were made – not sure as to the reason why.



To diverge or not to diverge?

The down diverging points soon after Gordon - take the points - you go via Bungaree, don't take them - your onto the new diversion.

On this occasion, 7010+7015 on 8103 went via Bungaree.

Upon arrival into Ballarat it was evident that the original plan (the first V'Locity passenger revenue run to be the 10:08 up service from Ballarat to Southern Cross) was now scrapped - as there were no V'Locities to be seen, nor politicians or dignitaries, and staff were still setting up equipment on the platform and food and beverages in the station area.

After querying at the station master's desk - I found out that the plan had changed - the 0938 Southern Cross to Ararat service was the first passenger revenue run, and this train was carrying the politicians and dignitaries.

With thanks to the conductor of the 1008 up service from Ballarat to Southern Cross who alerted me that I could get to Ballan by catching the 1008, then get the first V'Locity revenue service from Ballan at 1042, I opted to catch the 1008 from Ballarat to Ballan, arriving in on time at 1028.

Arrival of the 1042 into Ballan, was two minutes down at 1044 - however, I was just glad to be one of the only people to be on the first V'Locity revenue service!!!!



Left: The 0938 Southern Cross - Ararat service rounding the corner and arriving into Ballan.



Right: The 0938 Southern Cross - Ararat service arriving into the platform at Ballan.

TRAIN 8107 - 0939 Southern Cross - Ararat Service

Consist: V'Locity Units 11 (1211+1111), 23 (1223+1123) & 18 (1218+1118)

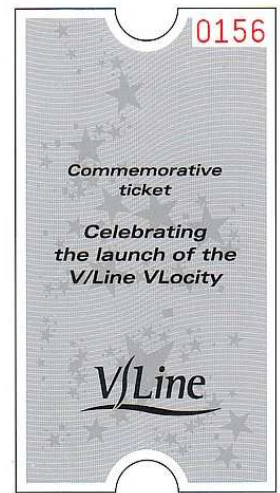


1211, part of Unit VL11 upon arrival into Ballarat.

Ballan 1044/45
Ballarat 1115

Upon arrival into Ballarat at 1115, the Victorian Premier, Hon. Steve Bracks, and Minister for Transport, Peter Batchelor, disembarked from 1211, along with other MP's, dignitaries and invited guests.

Once the car was clear of passengers bound for Ballarat, VL11 was uncoupled from VL23 & VL18, moved up the platform 5m or so, then departed for Ararat at approximately 1123, 5 minutes late (not bad considering the circumstances!)



A special commemorative ticket handed out to me whilst travelling on the first two V'Locity revenue passenger services to/from Ballarat.

The Launch

Soon after arrival into Ballarat, and after the departure of VL11 on to Ararat, and VL23+VL18 moving up the platform to be opposite the premier and guests for the speeches and media interviews, the public launch of the V'Locity 160 units on the Ballarat line got underway.

Speakers included the premier - Mr. Steve Bracks, followed by Mr. Rob Barnett, Chief Executive Officer - V'Locity, and Mr. Peter Batchelor - Minister for Transport.



Left: Premier Steve Bracks addressing the gathering of fellow MP's, V'Locity Staff, Bombardier Staff and Ballarat line passengers at the V'Locity Launch in Ballarat.



Above Right: Premier Steve Bracks, Minister for Transport Peter Batchelor and another dignitary discussing their ride on the V'Locity directly after disembarking off the train.



Right: Premier Steve Bracks, Minister for Transport Peter Batchelor and other dignitaries stand in front of V'Locity Unit 11 at Ballarat after arrival.



Left: V'Locity provided catering in the form of tea and coffee, orange juice and a selection of sandwiches for the guests aboard the first V'Locity revenue service run.

Right: V'Locity handed out quite nice show bags to passengers off the first V'Locity revenue service run.



Within each bag was a V'Locity cardboard money box, 'Go V'Locity' flag, V'Locity Pen, & brochure about the V'Locity trains.

The Return Trip

After the media circus had wrapped up their questions, Mr. Bracks and Mr. Batchelor left Ballarat station for their helicopters (or did they choose private cars this time?), and the general public were invited to look through the brand new V'Locity units as they pleased for around half an hour before departure of the service back to Southern Cross at 1215. After exploring Unit 18 inside and out - including the drivers cabs (thanks to the Bombardier member of staff who opened the rear cab and turned the cab lights on for me to take photos!), it was time for departure.

TRAIN 8134 - 1210 Ballarat - Southern Cross Service

Consist: V'Locity Units 18 (1118+1218) & 23 (1123+1223),



Ballarat	1215
Ballan	1237/39
Bacchus Marsh	1253/55
Melton	1307/09
Sunshine	1332/35 - WLC arrival of down 3 car Siemens
Southern Cross	1346

It was a good job by the driver to only be three minutes late into Southern Cross, considering we had to slow down approaching several automatic signals with a stop aspect displayed - crawling right up until a few metres away before being given the stick to go!!!

Left: 1118, part of VL18, at Ballarat, facing towards Melbourne with the 1210 service.

Personal Opinion on the V'Locities

Overall, I have a very positive opinion of the V'Locities - the interior has been designed as new from scratch and is very nice to view and the seats are nice and big and comfortable to sit in. The windows are large, clean and clear, and there's plenty of room for passengers luggage and personal belongings to be stowed.

Disabled passengers and wheelchairs are easily accommodated for - and disabled passengers seemingly now have a lot more space than they ever had aboard a V/Line service, with a dedicated area in each carriage with fold down seats allowing for four wheelchairs to be placed in each unit.

Two toilets are fitted - an easy to use wheelchair accessible toilet with automatic doors, and a swing door normal sized toilet, similar to that of those in saloon carriages, but modern!

Crew and cab facilities are excellent - both driver and conductor get a very comfortable adjustable height leather chair, plenty of room within the cab to move around, a mini-fridge to keep their food/drink in, and a CD player with a nice audio output (CD playing was sampled today on the trip back from Ballarat!)

I can't wait for them to make their debut next year on Traralgon line services!

Catching the 1425 Southern Cross to Traralgon service home, in the comfort of First class, I thought how equal to better the seating within V'Locities were! It would be great if V/Line were to totally refurbish their N cars to V'Locity seating standards - and I'm quite sure Transform Rail Interiors (seat supplier to VR/Goninan/Bombardier) wouldn't mind making another few hundred sets of seats after the V'Locities are completed!

A long day out, spanning over 11 hours and 480km - but it was all totally worth it!