

All aboard, if you can find a park

By Sumeyya Ilanbey

It's been nine years in the making, but Caroline Springs residents finally have their own train station ... albeit one with an issue.

The station opened on Sunday, January 29, offering 280 services a week, with trains running every 30 minutes during the peak and every hour off-peak.

But commuters and councillors are already concerned the 350-space car park won't be enough for the area's burgeoning population.

The station is surrounded by grasslands,

home to a critically endangered shrub, and it is in an isolated location where there aren't any off-street parking options.

Melton mayor Sophie Ramsey told reporters during the opening she would consider lobbying to get a high-rise car park, expecting the current one to be "full by about 7.30am".

"The city of Melton is a growth corridor, and we're going to have hundreds of thousands more people coming into this corridor," she said.

Meanwhile, Cambridge ward councillor Steve Abboushi, who's been using the station

every day, is also worried the 350 spaces won't be enough to meet the demand.

He raised a notice of motion at last week's council meeting urging it to write to Public Transport Minister Jacinta Allan and Kororoit MP Marlene Kairouz "seeking an urgent review of the number of car-parking spaces" at the new Caroline Springs station.

"Throughout my [election] campaign, a lot of residents had asked me when the Caroline Springs station is going to open and if they'd have sufficient car parking," Cr Abboushi told *Star Weekly* last week.

"In a hugely dense and congested area, car parking is always going to be an issue."

When *Star Weekly* visited the station last Wednesday - three days after its opening - there were about 150 empty car park spaces.

One commuter, Moses, said he was impressed with the design of the station and was pleased buses had serviced the area from day one.

Caroline Springs student Bea said she doesn't have to travel to Watergardens to catch a train.

"I've heard that there's limited spaces for car parking, but I think you just have to try out the station first and see what happens."

Indigenous health action

When David Jones adopted a reconciliation action plan (RAP) two years ago, the retailer made national headlines.

Now, Reconciliation Australia estimates more than 800 major Australian companies develop their own RAPs each year.

Women's Health West (WHW) is the latest organisation to come up with their own RAP, in a bid to lure more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to the company, and to improve health outcomes for Indigenous people in the west.

Elly Taylor, one of the WHW directors working on the new plan, says she hopes the blueprint will help develop stronger relationships with Elders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.

"We now have some dedicated positions in our family violence program to work with Aboriginal women and children, so they receive tailored services," Ms Taylor says.

She says the plan outlines WHW's vision for reconciliation.

"It is a list of actions we will undertake to increase programs and services for Aboriginal women and children.

"The actions are varied, and different members of staff at WHW have committed to undertake them within a set period of time," she says.

Those actions range from celebrating significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island dates throughout the year to increasing the take-up by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and young people in sexual and reproductive health programs.

"This provides really concrete action, strategies and commitments," she says.

The document will be officially launched on Wednesday at WHW's Footscray office.




Alexandra Laskie Cohealth's Crystal Harris with Elly Taylor from Womens Health West. (Dennis Manktelow)



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