



MEDIA RELEASE: FRIDAY, 10 AUGUST, 2018

BIG STEPS FORWARD FOR SOUTHERN AURORA COMMEMORATION

The Southern Aurora Memorial Committee has completed initial designs for a commemoration garden to respectfully acknowledge the Southern Aurora tragedy on 7 February 1969 and its aftermath in the lead-up to its 50th anniversary in February 2019.

The Southern Aurora was an overnight express passenger rail service running between Melbourne and Sydney that had a head on collision with a freight train in Violet Town on 7 February 1969, killing 9 people and injuring 120.

Strathbogie Shire Council is supporting the committee and providing initial financial support, along with the Violet Town Action Group.

The design involves an enduring and poignant memorial garden, including permanent interpretation materials.

VLine has generously agreed to donate a Southern Aurora carriage to display in the garden area.

The carriage will be placed in the gardens near the Violet Town railway station, and used as a feature to help tell the story of the Southern Aurora and the tragedy and aftermath.

The committee is also planning a significant event from 7- 10 February 2019, to launch the gardens and give acknowledgement to all those affected by the tragedy; passengers, train staff, workers, community volunteers and their families.

Southern Aurora Memorial Committee Chairperson Gary Abley said the group is still seeking funds and support, and welcomed anyone who is interested to get in contact with the committee.

"Hundreds of people contributed to help the hundreds affected, and it is all of those women and men we want to acknowledge," Mr Abley said.

"Like many people from Violet Town, and all the surrounding towns and districts, my family was involved at the time, and I am gradually learning more about that time."

Strathbogie Shire Mayor Amanda McClaren said Council is proud to support the efforts of the Southern Aurora Memorial Committee and looks forward to working with the committee to see the project advance.

"The Southern Aurora tragedy had such a profound impact on those directly involved in the incident, as well as our local community members who were so courageous in providing support and assistance at the time of the crash," Cr McClaren said.

"Violet Town is such a vibrant community that always punches above its weight.

This tragedy was a time where the courage and unity of the Violet Town people truly shone and Violet Town's strong sense of community has only developed since then."

Local historian, Bruce Cumming, whose family, like others, provided four members to help, said they have received significant interest across Australia and encouraged anyone with information about the incident they would like to pass on to contact him.

"Even the seemingly smallest piece of information can be a significant piece in the big jigsaw puzzle" Mr Cumming said.

For further information:

Bruce Cumming, History & Media, Southern Aurora Memorial Committee

Phone: 0419 540 552

Email: bruce.cumming1@bigpond.com

Find us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/southernauroracommemoration/

-ENDS-

Media contact: Clare Allen- 0418 336 078

Key Spokesperson: Mayor Amanda McClaren- 0409 700 958