

# MEDIA RELEASE



## FIRST FEMALE DRIVER MAKES TRACKS AT PUFFING BILLY

Puffing Billy Railway will celebrate an exciting milestone on Wednesday 31 July when volunteer, Belinda McKenzie, becomes the first female train driver in the railway's 119 year history.

Belinda, 40, will drive the 10.30am and 2.30pm trains from Belgrave Station, supported by an all female crew, including the fireman, guard, and conductors.

Belinda started volunteering at Puffing Billy in 2010 after she was introduced to the volunteering program on a visit to the railway.

"I've always been interested in trains, and was at Puffing Billy as a passenger when the driver and fireman saw me checking out the running gear of one of the engines," Belinda said.

"They invited me into the cab to take a look and we started chatting. I asked them how they got their jobs and they told me they were volunteers and that I could be, too. That was enough for me and I signed up that day!"

"It's strange to think that I am about to do the same job as those volunteers that I met nine years ago, and will be the first female to do so. It's very special," she said.

Belinda has held a number of volunteer roles during her time at Puffing Billy, including trainee driver, engine cleaner, guard, signalman, steam and diesel fireman, diesel holster, trolley driver and fire patroller. While female volunteers are few and far between in the rail industry, Belinda encouraged women to think beyond the hot, heavy, dirty work to the endless opportunities and unique experiences available to volunteers at Puffing Billy.

"The stereotypical image of a railway worker – hot and sweaty and covered in soot – is probably not very appealing to a lot of females, however there are so many volunteer roles at Puffing Billy and it would be great to see more females getting involved," Belinda said.

"I was the fourth female fireman at the railway - we now have two more, as well as a female trainee fireman who just started her training after a number of years as a guard, signalman and trolley driver."

"These hands-on rail roles are physically and mentally challenging, but it sure beats slogging away at the gym! It's a unique and interesting hobby and the friends I have met since being at the railway will last a lifetime."

"I love being part of something as special as Puffing Billy. Not many people know how to operate a steam train, so it is always a great topic of conversation when I meet people!" she said.

The railway has over 22 volunteer roles, from administration, events and retail, to station masters, engine cleaners and drivers. There are five entry level roles suitable for new recruits, all of which offer the opportunity to contribute to an iconic Melbourne attraction.

For further information about volunteering at Puffing Billy, please visit [www.puffingbilly.com.au/volunteer](http://www.puffingbilly.com.au/volunteer)