

# Moves to preserve Victor rail line



Savrail president Rex Tilbrook...campaign to save the line will continue.

**A renewed campaign to ensure Federal support to preserve the Victor Harbor Railway...and a Savrail meeting to plan action.**

These were developments following the release on Tuesday by Transport Minister Mr Roy Abbott of details of the decision of the Arbitrator on the future of the Victor Harbor railway line.

Mr Abbott said the independent arbitrator, Mr R. J. Pascoe, had found:

- The Commonwealth may im-

●The Commonwealth may implement its proposal to terminate passenger railway services between Adelaide and Victor Harbor, and

●The Commonwealth may implement its proposal to close the line between Strathalbyn and Victor Harbor on or after November 1, 1986.

On Wednesday, Savrail, which has been campaigning for seven years for retention of the line, was planning a meeting as soon as possible to consider the arbitrator's report and to plan action.

But its president, Mr Rex Tilbrook, said the matter was far from settled and Savrail would continue to fight

and Savrail would continue to fight for the retention of the line.

Meanwhile, Mr Abbott said the South Australian Government was disappointed but not surprised at the outcome of the arbitration.

The Arbitrator was appointed to determine the dispute over the line between the Commonwealth and State Governments, purely in terms of the Railways Transfer Agreement.

"There were many arguments to support the State's stand on this matter which could not be given full consideration by the Arbitrator in these circumstances," said Mr Abbott.

"We are certainly disappointed with the result, but this was only one avenue that the State has been exploring in its efforts to ensure continued use of the Victor Harbor line."

"The battle is far from over yet."

"I will be seeking urgent talks with the Federal Minister for Transport to further present the State's claims for Federal involvement in the future of the Victor Harbor line."

"The South Australian Government feels that the Commonwealth has an obligation, first, and most importantly, to renovate the track to an acceptable standard, and second, to be involved in any future operations on the line."

"In the State's opinion, these operations will inevitably be a specialised tourist service, quite unlike any of the services provided on the line and marketed by Australian National."

"Under the Railways Transfer Agreement, the Arbitrator has found that the Commonwealth can walk away from what has now become an uneconomic service."

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"However, the State feels that the Commonwealth, as a matter of equity, still has a responsibility to assist in preserving operations on the line."

"Australian National have argued that the sort of operations we see as being suitable for the future as a viable tourist service are not within their charter to operate."

"That could well be so, but that does not reduce the Commonwealth's obligation to support the preservation of, what is undoubtedly, one of Australia's most historic and scenic railway lines."

"The condition of the track has been allowed to deteriorate substantially since the Commonwealth took control and we believe it is now their responsibility to bring it up to an acceptable operational standard before it is handed back to the State."

"With sufficient co-operation from the Federal Government, I am confident that a permanent tourist railway could be developed on the Victor Harbor line."

"This would be a major drawcard during South Australia's Jubilee 150 and Australia's Bicentennial celebrations."

"There is overwhelming public support for the State Government's stand on this matter and the Premier, the Minister of Tourism and myself will be mounting a renewed campaign to ensure Federal support to preserve the Victor Harbor Railway."

Meanwhile, the Shadow Minister of Tourism Mrs Jennifer Adamson said the Premier and Minister of

Tourism had been urged to make urgent representation to the Federal Government to ensure the continuation of the line.

She said South Australians wanted the line to remain open.