

1 WHAT IS COMMUNITY STATIONS?

From BBQs, coffee carts, ice cream vans, mobile libraries, health promotions, cultural events, activities with artists, live music and more, Community Stations revitalize the concept of train stations as community hubs.

Train stations, because of their location and function, provide a central point for people to come together to participate in community life, learn, and celebrate. Community Stations provides an opportunity to host events and support local charities, civil organisations, and volunteer groups to make the station and community a better place. In doing so, the initiative plays a suicide prevention role in making stations less attractive for those wanting to undertake self-harm or suicide.

2 ABOUT THE PILOT PROJECT

The Community Stations Pilot Project took place in Melbourne (October 2016 – May 2017) and was a collaboration between TrackSAFE, Public Transport Victoria, Metro Trains Melbourne and V/Line as well as local councils, health services and community service providers.

Taking course over six months, the Pilot involved the transformation of four Melbourne stations – Dandenong, Ringwood, Sunshine and Melton stations – into community hubs with a large range of activities taking place. Activities included live music, book swaps, community gardens, BBQs, free self-portraits, coffee vans, visits from therapy dogs and more. The Pilot saw fantastic initiatives take place that drew the community in allowing members of the public to connect with others, while instilling pride in them towards their local station.

Tracksafe would like to acknowledge the efforts of Maroondah City Council, Sunshine Business Association and Djerriwarrh Health Services, without them the Pilot would not have been possible.

Access videos of the Community Stations Pilot Project at Ringwood and Melton Stations:



Community Stations: Our Journey of Linking Melton South DJ Health

Community Stations Pilot Project 2017
Maroondah City Council

3 EVALUATION BY THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

The University of Melbourne undertook an evaluation of the Pilot, a copy of the Evaluation Report is available on the TrackSAFE website. Pleasingly the Report found that the majority of people who noticed events in stations said that it led them to view their station more positively. More importantly, of those who noticed the mental health promotions, 58 percent said that it improved their understanding of people with poor mental health and 64 percent said it would make them more likely to reach out to someone they thought might be at risk of poor mental health.

The Evaluation Report also concluded that those activities involving free food and coffee were more favourably received and had a positive impact on overall mood. Being the recipient of a kind gesture, such as receiving food or drink at the station, served to elicit gratitude and appreciation from commuters, indirectly improving mood and improved feelings of wellbeing.

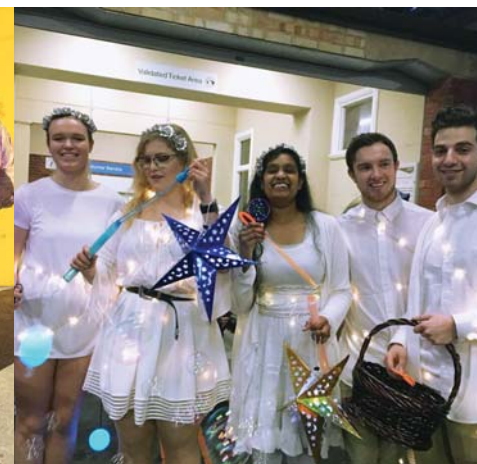
4 APPLYING COMMUNITY STATIONS LOCALLY

TrackSAFE recommends a project team is allocated to organise activities that generate high community involvement and create a positive atmosphere at the targeted stations taking into account the nature of each station and the surrounding community. An individualised approach is crucial for connecting with local community members. It is also vital to tie in mental health awareness activities as part of the action plan.

There may even be an opportunity to strengthen the existing infrastructure at local train stations through the installation of community-created art. An example includes at Melton Station during the Pilot, the community were involved in mosaic workshops as well as painting a public mural and brightening up the nearby underpass and stairs.

TrackSAFE recommends engaging with a number of stakeholders in the community (councils, local artists, libraries, schools, Police etc.) in devising an action plan to generate high community involvement and create a positive atmosphere at the targeted stations. The organisers must take into account the nature of each station and the surrounding community to remain true to the Community Stations initiative.

Performers (L to R): Image 1 – The Great Gizmo at Ringwood Station.
Image 4 – Random Acts of Kindness at Ringwood Station.
Image 5 – Brass Kids at Ringwood Station.
Image 6 – Felipe Cornego and band.



PROMOTION OF MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

The aim of Community Stations, along with improving ambience and transforming stations into community hubs, is to raise awareness of mental health in local communities, and of the services and resources that are available.

The Evaluation Report of the Pilot indicated that events involving food and coffee were the most noticed, and hence tying mental health promotions to these events is highly recommended. The aim is to catch the attention of those passing through the station with a food or coffee give-away and then have information and/or representatives on hand to provide further information.

TrackSAFE worked closely with Lifeline Australia and R U OK? on the Pilot project; organisers are encouraged to form partnerships with services in their local communities to be involved.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS/ COORDINATION OF ACTIVITIES

For each Community Stations location a calendar of events is to be developed and maintained. The program is to be shared with key stakeholders to ensure local community representatives and participants are clear about the areas in use and timings. It is recommended the calendar of events be kept as an internal document and not shared publicly.

Promoting Community Stations locally

Pre-organised activities that spontaneously appear will reach the right audience. The aim is to offer pop-up activities to regular commuters in the local community. As such, it is recommended that promotions of Community Stations remain localised thus to ensure the activities are enjoyed by locals, rather than people travelling from another destination in the hope of obtaining 'freebies'.

Key messages

The key communication messages for Community Stations are:

- To facilitate a range of community, charity and social events and practices at stations for the benefit of the community,
- Improve community members' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes about mental health,
- Create a positive environment at stations which will improve customer well-being.



BeBlocks at Ringwood Station. Photograph: Bryony Jackson.



STAFF TRAINING

One of the goals of Community Stations is to utilise rail staff to assist in the delivery of events, activities and liaising with community members.

Providing station staff with a background into the Community Stations initiative and providing guidelines to help staff change the rhetoric of the daily routine and reduce feelings of isolation and low self-esteem in individuals is essential.

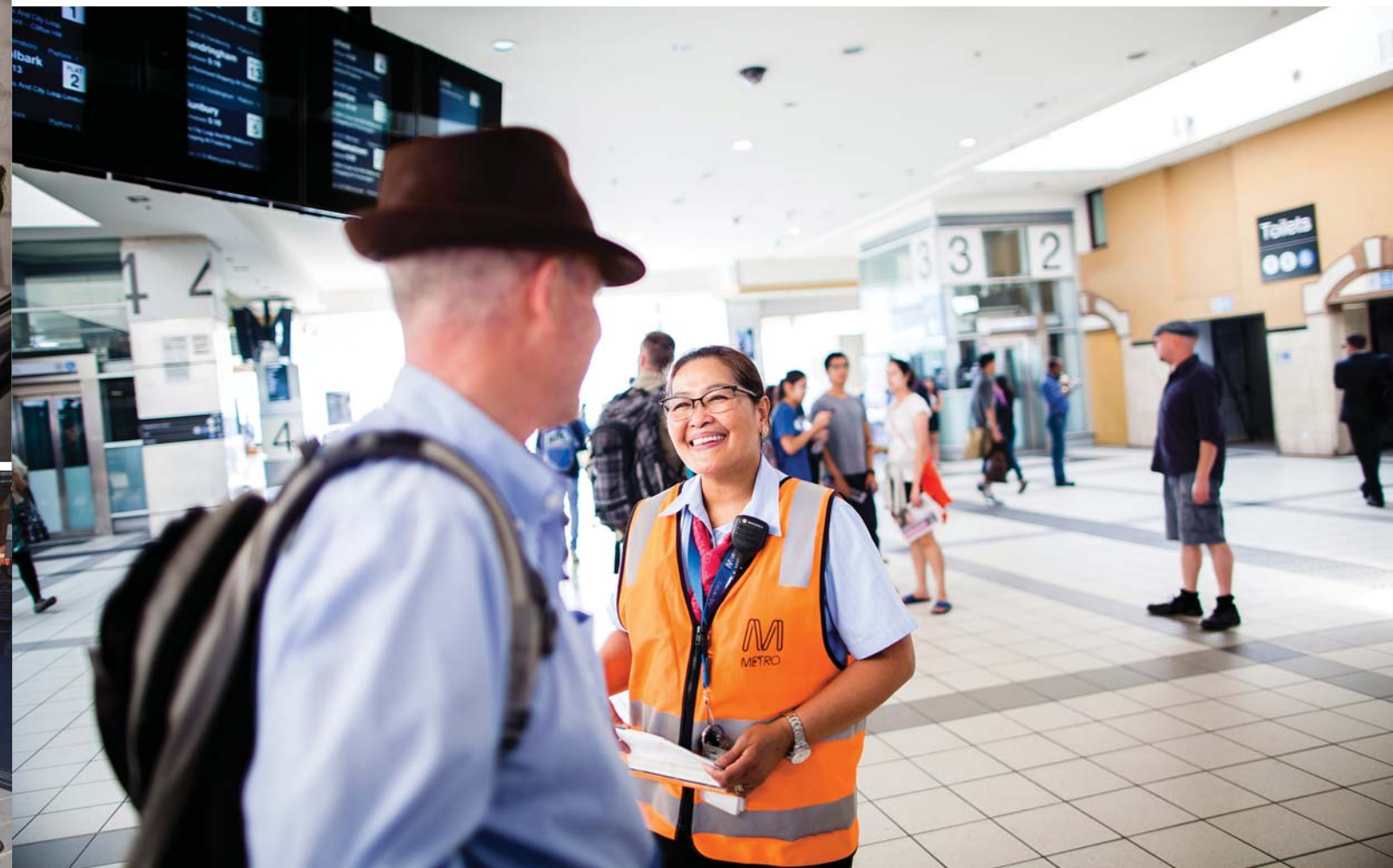
Additionally, trained station staff who can successfully identify at risk persons for suicidal (or other negative) behaviours and act accordingly is desirable. Such training would help rail staff assess threats and other issues at the station and intervene before an incident occurs.

TrackSAFE in partnership with the Black Dog Institute developed Suicide Awareness Training which is available to rail organisations. Please visit the TrackSAFE website for more information.

Volunteers

Look after those people kind enough to volunteer for the initiative. It is a good idea to feed information to volunteers on how to safely go about their activities in stations. Station Managers should provide a briefing to volunteers on safety information, restricted areas, where caution should be exercised and where their nearest bathroom facilities are.

Page 8 Performers (L to R): Image 1 – Melton Lions Club running a free BBQ at Melton Station. Image 2 – Therapy dogs at Melton Station. Image 3 – Tina Sparkle at Ringwood Station. Photograph: Bryony Jackson. Image 4 – Victoria Police community event at Ringwood Station. Image 6 – The Streetsweepers at Ringwood Station.





Free photos with Santa at Melton Station.

☒ **CHECKLIST FOR ORGANISERS**

- ☐ Identify station to hold Community Stations
- ☐ Analyse and assess station assets/surrounds, (ie state of infrastructure, surrounding areas/gardens to hold activities)
- ☐ Engage with local community groups and stakeholders to determine activity types
- ☐ Create an action plan and calendar of activities
- ☐ Share plan and calendar with internal and external stakeholders
- ☐ Brief station staff on the initiative
- ☐ Provide training to station staff where required (contact TrackSAFE should you require resources for suicide awareness training for platform staff)
- ☐ Brief any volunteers involved in your activities
- ☐ Publicise Community Stations activities locally
- ☐ Host Community Station activities
- ☐ Take photos and share on social media (attention to @TrackSAFE and use the hashtag #communitystations)
- ☐ Evaluate