

Media release

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Collie coal helps preserve rail history

Collie coal is being used to help people enjoy light rail and preserve the mode of transport.

Premier Coal donates the fuel source to help run the steam engines at Bennett Brook Railway in Perth's Whiteman Park.

The railway runs steam and diesel engine passenger train services around the park with the funds raised going toward preserving light rail locomotives and rolling stock.

Touring the railway's sheds and yards with vice chairman and foreman Ken Watson, it is clear this has been his labour of love since joining with his dad, two brothers and two mates to form the Western Australian Light Railway Preservation Association Incorporated in 1976.

The association formed Bennett Brook Railway in 1984, becoming one of the first tenants of Whiteman Park. The park offers a unique insight into transport heritage housing the collections of five groups ranging from motorcars and tractors to buses, trams and trains.

More than 25,000 passengers ride the trains at Whiteman Park each year. Those who take the 6.5km journey between May and September are likely to be behind a steam engine powered by Collie coal.

Ken said more than 140 volunteers along with Work for the Dole teams kept the train service operating and performed vital preservation work.

"Our main purpose is to preserve light railway," Ken said. "Our train services are a vital part of that as they not only raise funds but allow us to connect with the public. Our broader activities allow our volunteers and Work for the Dole teams to use and develop their skills in a friendly environment. We're a family."

Premier Coal General Manager Glenn Burlinson said the company was proud to assist Bennett Brook Railway and its outstanding work.

Photo caption: Ken Watson checks out Bennett Brook Railway's steam engine that is powered by coal from Premier Coal.

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