



A view of various proposed branchlines running from the Outer Circle railway around the 1890's era.  
Source: David W. Boardell and Brent H. Herbert. The Outer Circle: A history of the Oakleigh to Fairfield railway. (ARHS Vic. Division)

## 'WHATSOEVER HAPPENED TO THE PROPOSED RAILWAY TO DONCASTER EAST?'

The short answer is that the Labor government effectively torpedoed the plan in the early 1980s. If you believe Rob Maclellan, who was shadow minister for transport in 1984, the government — sometime between 1982 and 1984 — sold the land that had been set aside for the railway once it left the median strip of the Eastern freeway

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- 1890: Proposal put forward to extend the Kew line across the Outer Circle line to Warrandyte, with a branch line to Templestowe.
- 1920s: Further proposals put forward to extend the Kew line to Doncaster.
- \*Marc Faldian, *Communist, Scholars and Sleepers*

15 August 1952: Kew line closed.  
1959: A reservation for a major road from Doncaster Road to Mount Dandenong Road is created.

1961: Mr G O Greer, a city councillor of Kew, voices the need for a rail link to Doncaster.

1965: Mr Greer — now Mayor of Kew — urges construction of the railway at a dinner attended by the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, and a future Victorian Premier, Mr Rupert Hamer.

27 May 1969: The Age announces that 'detailed planning has started for the Victorian Railways' new line to East Doncaster, which will plug the most glaring gap in the suburban rail network. The article reports that the railway — running from near Victoria Park station on the Clifton Hill line down the middle of the proposed Eastern Freeway, then branching away to Doncaster — will be incorporated in the forthcoming 1969 Melbourne Transportation Study.

The chairman of the Board of Works, Mr A H Croxford, says 'a station will be built at Burke Road, and ultimately there would be car parks at stations and links for feeder bus services.' Work on the freeway will start next year, says the article, but 'no starting date for the railway has been given.'

9 December 1970: 'Work on the \$33 million Eastern Freeway will start in February or March, the Minister for Local Government (Mr Hamer) said yesterday,' writes John Jost in the Age. 'However, a date for work to start on the railway has not been announced — it might be many years.'

1971: Work begins on the Eastern Freeway, planned at this stage to end at Thompsons Road, Bulleen.

December 1971: Parliament passes legislation — the Eastern Railways Construction Act — setting the route for the new line along the Eastern Freeway to Thompsons Road, Bulleen, then through Templestowe to Blackburn Road, Doncaster, cutting through 30 houses.

27 June 1972: Possible routes for the outer section of the '\$42 million' railway will be investigated by the parliamentary public works committee, reports the Herald. 'There has been a certain amount of argument about the details of the route,' says the acting Transport Minister, Mr Meagher.

25 September 1972: Box Hill council rejects a proposed route forwarded by Doncaster — Templestowe council because it would interfere with open spaces under the Metropolitan Planning Scheme and cut into open space near Koonung Creek. (Sun).

20 October 1972: A Doncaster citizens' committee collects 2000 signatures on a petition against proposed routes forwarded to the government by Doncaster — Templestowe council. (Herald)

23 October 1972: A meeting of 1000 Doncaster residents presses the State Government to keep its original route for the railway and rejects two alternative routes proposed by Doncaster — Templestowe council. One of these follows the Eastern Freeway all along the Koonung Creek, instead of branching off at Bulleen. The other takes the railway past Doncaster shoppingtown and through the Eastern golf course to Blackburn Road, demolishing 110 houses. (Age)

19 December 1972: A parliamentary report on the railway sticks to its original plan and rejects six alternative routes, delighting the residents of Doncaster-Templestowe and angering its council. The public works committee values the outer section of the railway at \$23.5 million, criticises the government for allowing development to continue along the proposed routes, and puts estimated travel time at 20 to 25

minutes from Blackburn Road to Melbourne. The following day the Sun quotes the Transport Minister, Mr Wilcox, as saying the question of beginning the work is up to the State and Federal Treasuries. According to the Age, 'no starting date to the project was available yesterday. The report said the work might not start for "some years".'

23 February 1973: The Age reports in detail on the route of the railway:

1. From Victoria Park station to Thompsons Road via the Eastern Freeway median strip;
2. A sub-mile length along the Koonung Creek valley;
3. A section running north-east from the Koonung Creek valley to the entrance of a proposed tunnel near the corner of Harold and Dale streets, Bulleen;
4. A 1.5 mile tunnel running north-east under Manningham Road and High Street, Doncaster, to a point close to the corner of Oak Crescent and Fyfe Drive, Doncaster.
5. A 0.17 mile length running east from the east portal of the tunnel.
6. A 1.65 mile length running east to Tucker's Road.
7. A half-mile length to Blackburn Road terminating near the corner of King Street.

'To date no firm completion time has been given,' says the article. 'The Parliamentary Public Works Committee said following the announcement of its findings that the railway might not be begun for some years and acquisition of land was not urgent.'

May 1973: The Liberals pledge to construct the eastern railway to Bulleen — not Doncaster — in their transport policy. They are returned to power in the elections. No mention of the railway in Labor's policy.

20 December 1973: Despite giving the impression the route had been decided upon, the Public Works Committee is still working out possible routes for the outer section of the railway. Three routes — two of them new and far shorter than the third — are under consideration: scheme one, which stops at Balwyn Road (\$24 million); scheme two, which is scheme one plus a branch out to Doncaster Road (\$28 million); and scheme three, the route originally proposed (\$63 million — quite a cost blowout from \$42 million). (Age)

7 March 1974: The Age says the railway's estimated cost is now, depending on the route, between \$34 million and \$73 million. It quotes a transportation engineer, Mr Robert Morgan, as telling a Parliamentary Public Works Committee that none of the proposed routes could be justified on economic grounds and that a busway with exclusive or preferential right-of-way would be a better investment.

10 April 1974: 'Eastern Rail Plan May Be Ditched' says the headline in the Age. It says that the seven-man committee was told by the state executive council to investigate other transport alternatives, including a 'publicly operated high speed road-bus service.' 'The eastern railway... is expected to be very costly and has been given low construction priority by the Railways Board,' says the article.

11 April 1974: The Herald blasts the government for not revealing — after numerous cost estimates, committee hearings, even after passing legislation — what its stance on the railway is. The Doncaster-Templestowe Transport Action Group spokesman Mr Bevan Ramsden says his group has been 'duck-shoved' from minister to minister and from department to department. He says 'the need for official explanation is obvious after such a bewildering procession of promises and proposals.'