



□ This 1956 BB18 1/4 1079 class steam engine will travel 1850km from Rockhampton to Winton and back to mark centenary of the railway line to Longreach.

# Railway line's centenary gathers steam with trip

For the first time in about 30 years a steam train will cross the Drummond Range east of Alpha this weekend.

The Centenary Steam Train departs Rockhampton at 7.05 this morning for Emerald and Longreach/Winton the following day.

Four spokesman Mr John Peel said the trip was organised to celebrate the centenary of the railway line to Longreach, which opened on February 15, 1892.

The train, hauled by a BB18 1/4 class steam locomotive No.1079, will carry more than 100 people out of Rockhampton today in some carriages which date back to World War I and the early 1900s.

The journey will amount to 1850km — the longest single run a Queensland steam train has done alone.

The loco was built by Walkers Limited, Maryborough, in 1956 and is one of four steam locomotives in use Queensland.

The last steam trains on the Central Western line were withdrawn in 1963 and the only remainders of the past are a few water tanks and piles of ash beside the line.

Mr Peel said it was the first time this locomotive had been west of Emerald.

He said the slowest part of the

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journey would be crossing the Drummond Range. It would take more than an hour to travel 22km.

The Drummond Range crossing has the sharpest curves and steepest grades in Queensland.

Mr Peel said it was the most ambitious steam-hauled excursion organised by the Australian Railway Historical Society.

The train will be staffed by volunteers with the exception of the driver, fireman and guard.

He said planning had finished with timetables, loco watering points and coal supplies organised.

"We are very grateful to shire councils and tourist associations for their help," Mr Peel said.

To give as many western people a ride the society has limited the number of people traveling from Brisbane.

Rockhampton residents can travel to Blackwater and return by McCafferty's bus that afternoon.

They will also add extra carriages at Emerald and Barcaldine.

Barcaldine dignitaries will board the train at Lochnagar for the ride into town.

Highlights of the tour will be a street mardi gras at Barcaldine and welcome by Shire chairman Cr

Lance Norman on May 15.

The next morning a bush morning tea will be held at the Ilfracombe museum where local dignitaries will board the train for Longreach.

It will arrive at noon with a civic reception hosted by Longreach Shire chairman Cr Barty Deane.

Mr Peel said passengers would visit the Hall of Fame. Barcaldine residents were able to buy seats with the same number reserved on the Midlander for the return trip from Longreach.

All schools handy to the line will be able to have a ride. The train will take the children one way from one town to the next and return by bus.

Extra carriages will be added at Longreach for the trip to Winton on Sunday.

Winton Shire Council chairman Cr Eric Lenton will host another civic welcome where lunch will be provided by the Winton Tourist Association.

Mr Peel said there were plenty of tickets left for the journey from Barcaldine to Winton, and all places in between.

Another highlight of the journey will be the launch of Isabel Hoch's book, *To the Setting Sun*, which details the history of the line to Longreach.