Murray Valley Coaches

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By the start of the twentieth century, railways had been constructed radiating out from both Sydney and Melbourne. The border regions were well serviced by rail running north-south, but there were no reliable links running east-west.

In November 1934, newspapers along the Murray ran advertisements announcing that "A cross-country service will be inaugurated on December 3rd … your short cut to the East and the West." The service would connect "Albury-Numurkah-Echuca-Swan Hill" and be known as "Murray Valley Passenger Service."

Trucking brothers, Keith and Vernon Lawrence. started in a small way with a five-passenger vehicle and soon added a converted truck with seven seats. The three-times weekly service between Albury and Swan Hill was immediately popular and ran to capacity with a weekly aggregate distance travelled of 1560 miles (2510 km).

An article in the *Albury Banner* in September 1937 reported "It was not long before the frequency increased to daily in each direction. Extensions to the service, both in the sense of greater route mileage and by the provision of bigger and better vehicles, have been continuous."

Albury City celebrations in 1947, Murray Valley Coaches' articulated coach in Dean Street passing the National Building, Mid States Radio, American Dry Cleaners, National Bank, Hoysted Bros Saddlers, the Border Morning Mail office, Commonwealth Bank, Globe Hotel. [Albury LibraryMuseum image]

By 1936, the service, now commonly known as Murray Valley Coaches, had extended to Mildura and Corryong. By the time Adelaide was added in 1937, the aggregate mileage had "grown to 6334 (10,200 km), with 11 modern motor coaches." A coach leaving Corryong at 4am would arrive in Adelaide by 6pm the following day. The following year, just four years after the company had started, both Canberra and Sydney were added to the routes.

The company had also branched into tourism with 'packages' offered such as an "eight-day all expenses paid holiday to Mt Buffalo" in collaboration with Mt Buffalo Chalet.

As the company profits grew, new premises were needed. In 1947 they moved into custom-built premises on the north-east corner of Kiewa and Swift Streets Albury (the building survives in 2022).

Two years later, in November 1949, the company purchased historic 'Meramie' in Kiewa Street. The building had operated as a private hospital and was easily converted into a "travel lodge." Over the next couple of years, the company purchased more accommodation properties along their routes.

In the mid to late 1950s, faced with rising operating costs and declining passenger numbers (due in part to increased car ownership), Murray Valley Coaches drastically cut its services. By 1959 the decline was terminal, the company was delisted and went out of business.