



Central Coast Regional Organisation of Councils (CCROC)

Response to Additional questions relating to the Inquiry into Inter-Regional Public Transport

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
STATE AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

14 November 2012

Mr Steven Green
Advisor Transport and Infrastructure
Central Coast Regional Organisation of Councils
PO Box 21
GOSFORD NSW 2250

Dear Mr Green

Inquiry into inter-regional public transport

I write further in relation to your appearance before the State and Regional Development Committee on 26 October 2012.

The Committee indicated that it might provide you with some additional questions relating to the above inquiry. I would therefore appreciate your response to the following questions listed below:

1. What are the main hindrances to inter-regional transport for Central Coast residents?
2. In order to increase the number of intrastate, interstate and overseas travellers to regional New South Wales:
 - a. How can *CountryLink* services be improved?
 - b. How can the marketing of *CountryLink* services be improved?
3. To which destinations, other than Sydney, is there a need for improved services from the Central Coast?

The Committee requests that answers to the above supplementary questions be provided to the Committee by close of business on Friday, 30 November 2012.

If you have any questions in relation to this matter, please do not hesitate to contact Committee staff on 9230 2161.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'T Buttsworth'.

Todd Buttsworth
Research Officer

1 What are the main hindrances to inter-regional transport for Central Coast Residents.

The main hindrance for inter-regional transport is on the road feeder network to the railway stations where during peak periods, road congestion extends the time it takes to travel. This congestion adversely impacts travel times for bus services and the desirability for commuters to catch a bus. In many areas the bus routes have to travel longer distances to service the residential catchments.

The rail capacity between Sydney and Newcastle is of limited capacity and travels at comparatively slower speed than travel on the F3 Freeway. Consequently a large proportion of inter-regional travellers are opting to use their cars rather than public transport.

The affordability of being able to drive inter-regionally has increased with a trend over say last ten years where a relatively abundant supply of cheap new and second hand cars has contributed to car domination as the main mode of transport. The free commuter carparks provided at railway stations are possibly hindering the optimum potential bus and train utilisation levels. Perhaps a comparable free bus ride could be offered to commuters as a way of improving public transport utilisation.

Perceived personal safety levels of travelling by bus or train can be strong driver to overcome any fears residents may have of walking to their nearest local bus stop, wait for a bus (bus frequency or infrequency), waiting at the railway station and then trains.

2. In order to increase the number of intrastate, interstate and overseas travellers to regional New South Wales:

a. How can CountryLink services be improved?

We believe that rail access to regional areas in NSW is imperative in the development of tourism strategies for country NSW. This should be addressed by the development of specific fare products that are targeted at the changing nature of overseas travellers to NSW and effectively drive tourism to regional areas of NSW that are currently serviced by CountryLink.

The NSW Travel Pass for International Visitors would be aimed at increase CountryLink patronage and encouraging regional tourism by having an easy, convenient and unlimited travel pass for overseas visitors to tour the NSW countryside via the rail system.

Currently, CountryLink develops various fare products aimed at increasing patronage and encouraging regional tourism in NSW. CountryLink also manages the sales and does all the marketing of these products. Current products developed by CountryLink include:

- Country Pensioner Excursion ticket,
- NSW Pensioner Travel Voucher,
- Half fare for pensioners
- 15% "Study fare" ,
- \$1 fare for children,
- Family fares,
- 30% discount in low season

We note that all current fare products developed by CountryLink are focused on “domestic customers” with no products developed for International markets.

Market Share: The Domestic Market Share in NSW for Regional Overnight Travel is currently considered “mature”, with the Sydney Region only having 26.6% of nights in NSW.

On the other hand, for International Overnight Travel, the Sydney region has received 83.7% of nights in NSW’s Market Share according with the latest Sydney Tourism Statistics extracted from www.destinationnsw.com.au

The changing traveller mix to NSW as described in the article below, presents the challenges and opportunities for tourism in NSW.

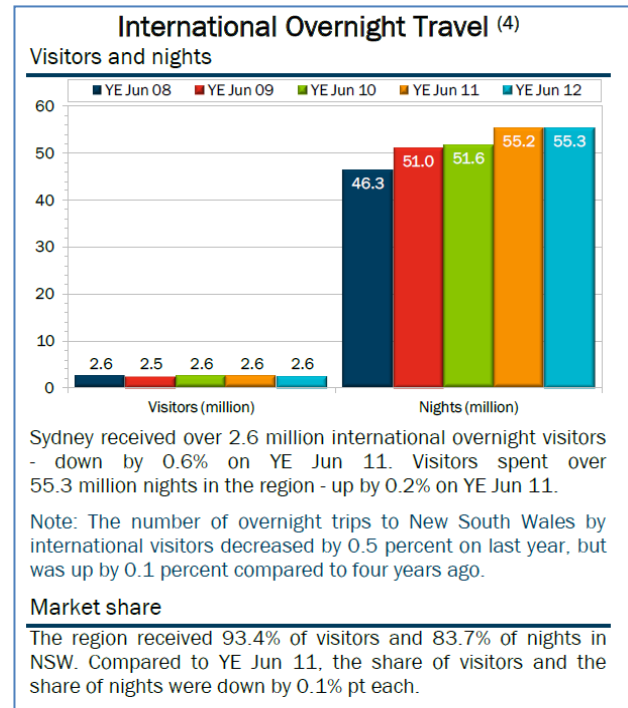
The travel pass would be a tool to assist the new mix of first-time international tourists to disperse more easily and conveniently and perceived as good value.

<http://www.smh.com.au/travel/travel-news/foreign-travellers-shun-regional-attractions-20121124-2a03d.html>

Likewise, *Destination NSW*’s website states the following:

International markets are strategically vital to NSW’s tourism industry as they have the greatest potential for significant growth in visitor arrivals and expenditure. International visitors to NSW stay longer than domestic visitors and spend more.

The data suggests that there are opportunities to leverage consumer interest in Sydney and attract more visitors to the state. The Travel Pass Product would primary focus in international visitor market to promote Sydney, including surrounding regions such as the Central Coast, Wollongong and the Blue Mountains and further regional NSW destinations for overnight stay.



(4) Source: International Visitor Survey (IVS), YE Jun 12, TRA

The Product: The NSW Travel Pass

(An overview of the concept has been provided in our previous submission)

Unlimited travel to over 360 CountryLink destinations ,including Canberra, Melbourne and Brisbane and integrated with other Transport NSW modes such as local trains, light rail, ferries and bus services.

(The tourist wouldn't need to find out how and where to purchase additional tickets for each stage of their journey)



Rail pass holders would not use automatic ticket gates (Not required adaptation of NSW Rail Stations and current enforcement methods could be easily adapted)

When passing through ticket gates, Japan Rail Pass holders don't use the automatic ticket gates, but have to pass through the manned gate and present their rail pass to the staff. On occasions pass holders can be asked to also show their passports.





Pass holders have to use the manned gate (right) instead of the automatic gates (left)

b. How can the marketing of CountryLink services be improved?

CountryLink currently manages sales and marketing of current fare products.

For this reason we propose the Marketing and Sales focus to work through industry partnerships.

Partnership of Government agencies with private tourism operators increases the chances of creating a consistent marketing impact for CountryLink products more efficiently than trying to do so independently.

The content below has been adapted from Destination NSW website link:

Marketing in International Market <http://www.destinationnsw.com.au/tourism/marketing-overview/marketing-in-international-markets>

Marketing Approach for the Rail Pass Product

At a consumer level international audiences have quite limited knowledge of what to do and see in Australia - but they are motivated by nature experiences and iconic destinations such as Uluru, the Great Barrier Reef and Sydney.

To leverage consumer interest in Sydney and attract more visitors to the regions serviced by CountryLink, an important aspect of the Rail Pass product that focus in international markets is to promote regional area of NSW.

The Travel Pass Product would primary focus in international visitor market to promote Sydney, including surrounding regions such as the Central Coast, Wollongong and the Blue Mountains and

further regional NSW destinations. The pass could promote Sydney as the International Gateway, to Australia other than Melbourne and Brisbane, as the NSW Rail Pass could be only activated by its holder in NSW. (Ideally at the International Airport Rail Station and be first used as the Airport Transfer to Sydney)

Promotional activity of the Rail Pass could also undertake to support major coastal touring routes serviced by the Rail Pass including areas of outstanding natural appeal including alpine, coastal and tropical regions.

Examples:

- <http://pacificcoast.com.au/>,
- <http://www.investcentralcoast.com.au/location-access-transportation#.ULL7fuScfzg>

Target Audiences

The primary international holiday target audiences are professionals aged 25-54 earning above average income and living in major cities. Compared to the average consumer these 'experience seekers' are individuals who spend more and like to engage with local people and lifestyle. Other important segments are youth – which include backpackers and working holiday visitors and education visitors.

International visitors are less concerned about the overall journey time and are more focused on the experience. Scenic views, flexibility and centrally located stations are considered an advantage when compared to air travel.

For domestic customers in Australia Rail travel times and cost is considered uncompetitive relative to road and air.

Partnership Marketing

CountryLink could conduct much of its brand marketing activity in conjunction with major industry partners such as Destination NSW and Tourism Australia, which provides a cooperative platform for state promotions.

CountryLink could encourage participation by NSW tourism operators and International operators for selling Rail Passes and development of programs and packages using the NSW Rail Pass.

CountryLink could also initiate targeted independent consumer print, digital and publicity activity – usually in association with international travel wholesalers.

Distribution Development

A critical objective for Destination NSW's overseas teams is to encourage the packaging and sale of NSW destinations and product experiences through travel distributors such as airlines, retail agents and wholesalers. The NSW Rail Pass could be individually sold by such travel distributors or as part of a package.

Destination NSW conducts regular sales calls with distributors and also organises cooperative trade marketing activities for NSW operators. These include participation at trade and consumer travel

shows; trade missions to key markets; and agent familiarisation visits to Australia. The aim: to help industry operators get their product to market.

3 **Which destinations other than Sydney, is there a need for improved Services from the Central Coast.**

Sydney is the main destination for Central Coast residents with if possible improved access to Sydney and Newcastle airports using public transport.

Steven Green

Advisor Transport and Infrastructure

Central Coast Regional Organisations of Council