

**Submission
No 148**

INQUIRY INTO INTER-REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Organisation: Destination NSW
Name: Ms Sandra Chipchase
Position: Chief Executive Officer
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Mr Andrew Gee MP
Chair
State and Regional Development Committee
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Minister

Inquiry into Inter-Regional Public Transport

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the State and Regional Development Committee's Inquiry into Inter-Regional Public Transport.

Destination NSW is tasked with devising and implementing strategies to grow the visitor economy, with particular focus on driving tourism and acquiring and developing major sporting and cultural events for Sydney and regional NSW. In addition, Destination NSW is the major investor in Business Events Sydney with the aim to secure more international conventions, incentive travel reward programs, corporate events and exhibitions for Sydney and regional NSW.

One of the aims of Destination NSW is to encourage visitors to experience regional NSW and the provision of transport options to meet the various needs of travellers is central to this aim. Destination NSW regularly partners with CountryLink to deliver campaigns to promote transport and accommodation packages in Sydney and regional NSW via the CountryLink network. These campaigns are highly successful and offer affordable holidays and short breaks to visitors.

The response focuses on how CountryLink products can be improved to better serve the customer and improve the experience of rail travel. Destination NSW has also provided input into the NSW Trade & Investment submission and it is suggested that these comments are read in conjunction with that submission.

Yours sincerely



Sandra Chipchase
Chief Executive Officer

How network linkages between CountryLink train and coach services can be improved. Timetabling needs to be improved to ensure that services depart and arrive at times which are convenient to passengers. In the case of services arriving in regional NSW they need to be better aligned with onward transport, particularly bus services to surrounding destinations.

How CountryLink services can be better utilised to increase tourism in NSW.

Destination NSW believes that there is considerable scope to introduce new and improved customer services in order to make rail travel a more attractive and viable option for more travellers and increase tourism in NSW.

Destination NSW recognises that there are limitations in the scope of upgrading rail infrastructure in NSW however for international visitors the level of comfort and on-board facilities need to be increased to world-class standards to bring CountryLink in line with rail services in countries such as France, Germany, United Kingdom and Japan.

Consideration could be given to the following:

- The operation of mobile food and beverage carts in carriages to enable all passengers to purchase refreshments including alcoholic beverages on long haul services.
- The introduction of schemes to allow:
 - Pre-approved local vendors to board trains at specific points and sell their produce to passengers before alighting at the next station stop; and
 - Entertainment from pre-approved buskers who move through carriages.
- Integration of public transport into ticket packages for major events in regional NSW such as CMC Rocks the Hunter.
- Special carriages on routes that service major events such as Sydney – Newcastle for the Surfest.
- Consider the introduction of festival trains (similar to the CountryLink Elvis Express for the Parkes Elvis Festival) for visitors traveling to major regional events such as Bluesfest in Byron Bay or Surfest in Newcastle.
- Make more travel passes available to Australian residents. Currently Australian residents can only purchase the East Coast Discovery Pass out of the eight passes offered by Australian rail operators.
- Carriages configured with tables and working areas equipped with wifi and facilities to charge mobile devices and laptops and similarly equipped Conferencing trains to service the Meetings, Incentives, Conference and Exhibition market in regional NSW;
- The operation of “Kids Cars” during school holidays which, for a nominal charge, would provide a place for children to watch films or participate in appropriate activities under the supervision of a “Kids Club” leader;
- iPads (with headphones) loaded with movie and tv content available to rent on long haul journeys;
- Increased options to transport bicycles, surf boards, skis and other equipment on trains and the ability to include this function in online bookings.