

**Submission
No 33**

INQUIRY INTO INTER-REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Organisation: Scone Neighbourhood Centre
Name: Mrs Lee Watts
Position: Manager
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Submission: Inquiry into Inter-Regional Public Transport in NSW

Trains are the most common form of public transport from the Upper Hunter to other centres in NSW and elsewhere with bus services being largely non-existent or commercial coach services being both inconvenient and expensive. The Countrylink train currently leaves Scone South once a day and north once a day.

Countrylink is used by the majority of people for safety reasons and because tickets can be purchased in Scone through the Neighbourhood Centre as a Countrylink Agency. Currently the Scone station is unmanned.

Many frail aged and people with a disability but also the wider community access rail to reach medical appointments. The timing of the train South is unsatisfactory, leaving at 12.50pm and arriving in Central at 5:00pm resulting in the need for an overnight stay which then adds additional costs to already costly appointments.

The alternative to using Countrylink is the Cityrail service which heads south at 6:02 am, 6:42 pm or 8:33 pm on weekdays – these services arrive in Central at 10:33 am, 11:35 pm and 4:33 am respectively on week days. In order to return to Scone from Sydney on the same day one needs to depart Central at 1:15 pm to arrive in Scone at 6:06 pm leaving one a window from approximately 10:30 am to 1:15 pm to conduct necessary business. Either that, a traveller would have to depart Central at 3:15pm to arrive back in Scone at 7:55pm meaning a 14 hour return trip; something which passengers who are frail, aged or disabled would find extremely burdensome.

A similar problem exists travelling north via the Countrylink service in that the train departs at 2:14 pm and it is impossible to travel back to Scone on the same day by rail. It's common for passengers to have to attend appointments in Tamworth, but because of this, they are required to stay overnight adding substantially to their costs. This is exacerbated by there being no Cityrail or alternative rail service on the line north of Scone.

The need to provide a train at a time around 9.30 – 10am in the morning after children are in school and it is a sensible hour for senior members to get around is on the forefront of many travellers minds. These changes would make travelling much easier for all.

Public Transport is a suitable way to travel as the New England Highway has become more and more congested with a steady stream of cars and trucks increasing and the travel time increasing, the cost of petrol has increased dramatically and aged people are often not comfortable travelling when reaching an age where reflexes are not as good in earlier years.

It is our recommendation that Countrylink services be increased to a frequency of twice daily and that at the very least, the Cityrail service to Muswellbrook be extended to Scone.

Lee Watts
Manager
Scone Neighbourhood Centre
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