

INQUIRY INTO INTER-REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

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Brisbane – Northern Rivers Commuter Train Service

Concept Proposal Service Options Analysis

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**The Case for an essential
transport link and a World class
tourist journey experience**

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Executive Summary:

It is estimated that by 2025, one quarter of Australia's population will live within the coastal region from Hervey Bay to Coffs Harbour. (BB 2004) The Far North Coast Regional Strategy limits future land release for urban or rural residential development within the Coastal Area to protect fragile and vulnerable areas and ecosystems. By catering for additional housing in other parts of the Region, this policy will help sustain and invigorate non-coastal centres. (FNCRS 2006) By 2026 30% of the Northern Rivers population will be over 60 years of age. (REIP 2010) In recent years, Sydney and the Richmond-Tweed area of Northern Rivers region have had the fastest population increase in NSW with both growing at an average rate of 1.7 per cent per year. (NSW 2021) NSW 2021 also indicates significant population growth for the Northern Rivers region over the next 20 years. The latest ABS figures indicate the migration to the western hinterland areas of the Northern Rivers has begun; Kyogle recorded .3% population growth after years of negative growth at -.1%. This is a significant turnaround.

This information identifies a critical and present issue for improved regional transport networks. This proposal examines the immediate economic, environmental and social benefits of establishing a twice daily (Day Trip) Cross Border Commuter Train Service between the Northern Rivers Region of NSW and South East Queensland, one of Australia's fastest growing regions using the existing North Coast Rail Line; three examples of how this can be achieved are examined, all will be cost recovery on investment.

“**NSW 2021** is the 10 year plan to rebuild the economy, provide quality services, renovate infrastructure, restore Government accountability and strengthen our local environment and communities. The **State Infrastructure Strategy** is the 20 year plan to renovate the State's infrastructure which outlines how and where we will invest in critical infrastructure. It will ensure that the right infrastructure is built at the right time and at the right cost”. (Transport NSW 2012)

It is estimated that a twice daily Commuter Rail Service between the Northern Rivers and Brisbane would receive \$1,916,250.00 in ticket sales in the first year, projecting that 150 passengers (37.5 per trip) used the service a day at a ticket price of \$35.00 return.

The three options to be examined in detail are:-

1. Adjust time tables for existing Countrylink XPT services. Extend the Sydney to Casino XPT service to Brisbane allowing for an afternoon service, thus providing essential day trip commuter rail service. This service was the former Sydney to Murwillumbah service which now terminates at Casino;
2. Introduce Rail Motor services modelled on the Endeavour and Hunter Rail Cars which service Sydney to the Illawarra and Hunter Valley regions;
3. Encourage Queensland Rail to continue installing a third rail extending from Salisbury to Bromelton and onto Casino to allow their narrower gauged light rail to service the area.

All of the above options can be developed as significant Joint State Government Cross Border Projects potentially sourcing Federal funding through Infrastructure Australia. ***“Infrastructure Australia's focus is on assisting Australian governments to develop a strategic blueprint for unlocking infrastructure bottlenecks and to modernise the nation's economic infrastructure”.*** (<http://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/about/>)

Introduction (Purpose of document)

The purpose of this document is to identify immediate and cost effective solutions to the critical need for improved regional and cross border transport networks. Information provided in this document has been researched from a number of reports that indicate a similar theme. The Northern Rivers regional population is growing, but services are not growing with them. The Northern Rivers transport network consists of a confusing collection of Rail, Coach and Bus services that run to inconvenient timetables and connecting services.

This document focuses on the social, economic and environmental benefits of introducing an immediate and cost effective rail commuter services from The Northern Rivers to Brisbane on the existing North Coast Rail Line. These services would link the Northern Rivers region using the existing Countrylink Rail/Coach services. It is believed the introduction of these improved rail services will be the key to unlock a number of other regional transport solutions. The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics indicates that the predicted migration to the western or hinterland areas of region has begun. The convenient connectivity by rail to the major commercial, medical and events centre of Brisbane will be the trigger for improved East West regional transport networks. Commuter demand will indicate the need for the future reintroduction of the Casino to Murwillumbah rail service as a vital component in the Northern Rivers transport network.

1.0 Background

Rail has been the life line for the Northern Rivers for many years. The ability to move produce to ports for shipment to major markets saw a significant increase in Primary Industry productivity and population growth. Rail also serviced commuters between towns and coastal holidays. The extension of the North Coast line to Brisbane in 1930 saw another boom for the Northern Rivers region with the ability to move produce and people efficiently to the major port, commercial and medical centre of Brisbane. Although over the Border, Brisbane is seen as the Northern Rivers accessible Capital City being only 2 ½ hours rail journey away from Countrylinks Coach/Rail Northern Rivers distribution centre at Casino.

Prior to the introduction of the XPT the Brisbane Limited provided a daily service, that allowed day trips to Brisbane, if patronage figures are needed to support an argument it is recommend looking at figures prior to 1995. Rail travel has historically been the life line on the Northern Rivers hinterland. Local Country Railway Stations are part of the history, culture and held in esteem by their local communities. Once highly valued as the economic drivers for regional areas, commuter rail services have been significantly reduced and along with them so have the economic opportunities surrounding rail travel. "Travelling long distances by train has been part of the Australian way of life for almost 150 years. Countrylink continues that tradition by carrying almost two million passengers every year to over 365 destinations in NSW, Queensland, the ACT and Victoria." (http://www.countrylink.info/about_countrylink).



Pre 1995 Brisbane Ltd Exp



Brisbane Ltd Troop Train



Countrylink XPT

These statistics can be improved using Countrylink's existing distribution network in Casino. Close proximity to Northern Rivers Towns, Villages and Rural Regions provides the ideal location to be the hub of a Cross Border Commuter Transport Network. The current Sydney to Brisbane daily rail service runs to an inconvenient time table and is unattractive to users resulting in it not used effectively as a cross border transport network. It is predicted that the introduction of a 'user friendly' commuter rail service would realize a dramatic increase in passenger numbers as the only alternative for some is to drive.

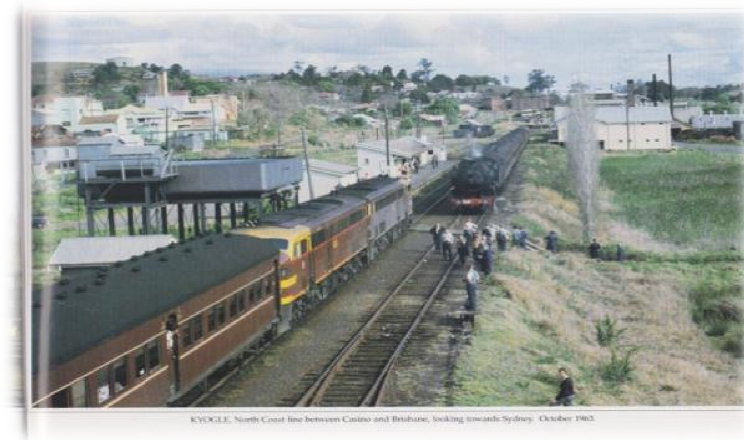
The Rail Network Restructure:

History shows that rail was an essential service for isolated regional areas to move produce and commuters more efficiently and quickly. With improvements to roads and vehicles the use of rail services declined. The need for major review and restructure of services was critical. The Greiner State Government in 1988 enlisted the services of Booz-Allen Hamilton to prepare a report into rail services (see Appendix 1).

"Countrylink was formed as a business unit of the State Rail Authority in 1989 to operate all non-metropolitan long distance passenger services. It inherited a fleet of XPT and locomotive hauled passenger trains. This was following the election of the Greiner State Government in 1988 and the publication of the Booz- Allen Hamilton report into NSW rail services. This report recommended closing all country passenger services as they were considered economically unviable; however this was initially implemented but never fully introduced. Many locomotive hauled long distance trains, such as the Brisbane Limited and the Pacific Coast MotoRail were withdrawn and replaced by XPT services at about this time".

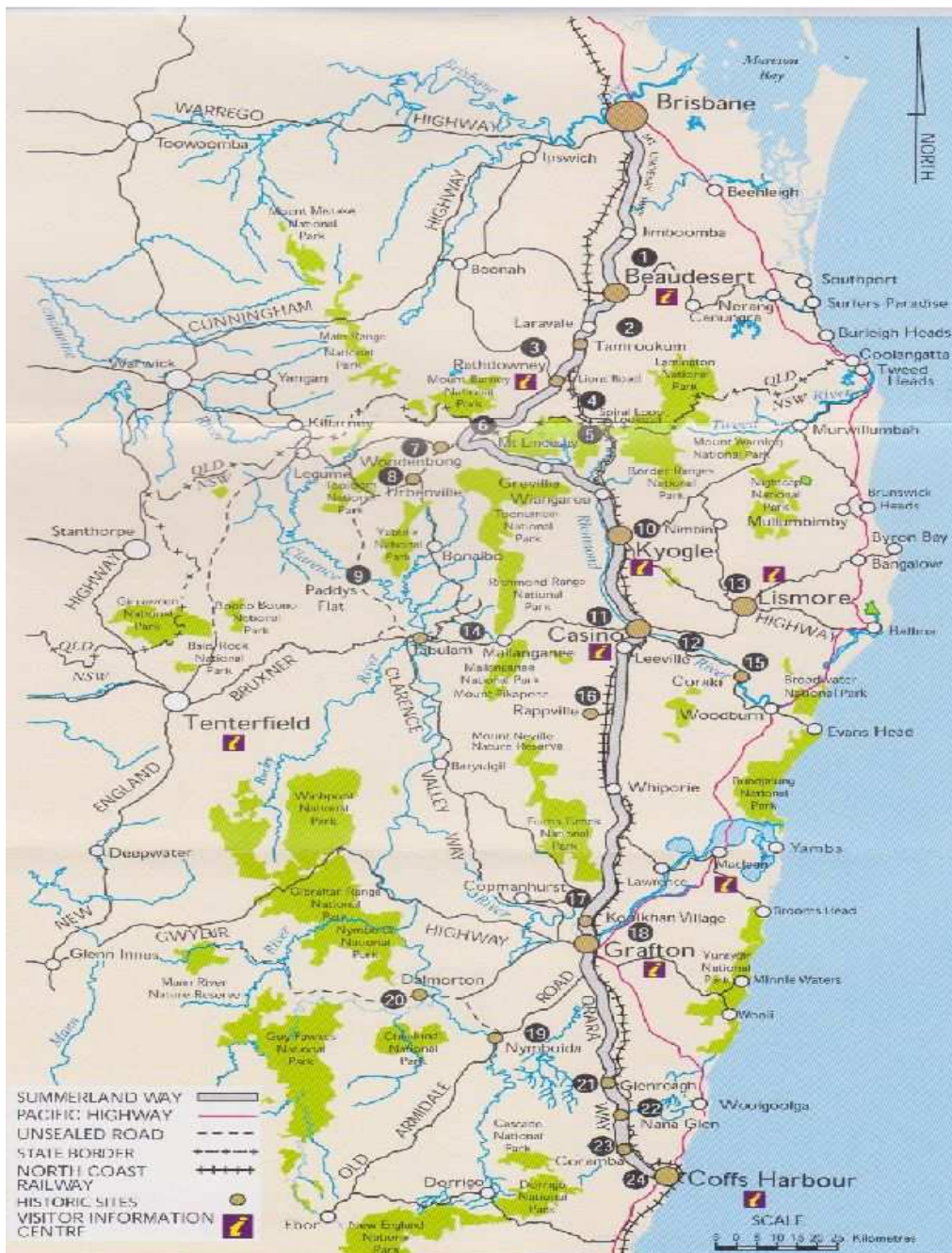
(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CountryLink>)

Today with the cost of fuel, traffic congestion and an aging population a further review of rail services would be recommended, as many regional commuters are once again isolated through lack of efficient transport networks. The introduction of an efficient commuter rail service from the Northern Rivers to Brisbane using the existing North Coast line would provoke improved services to rural local transport networks. The NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan Forum held recently in Lismore identified the need to, "incorporate the needs of the most transport disadvantaged groups in regional communities, for example Aboriginal communities and young people and the use of mobility management and transport coordination technologies to ensure that new and existing transport services are coordinated with the needs of existing and potential passengers". (Northern Rivers Social Development Council 2012)



Kyogle Station and Goods Yard October 1963

Location map – Summerland Way



(Source: RTA /Pub.06.061 Heritage Drives Self-Guided Tours)

The Summerland Way:

Is the alternate route to the Pacific Highway, from Brisbane to Coffs Harbour, following the North Coast Railway Line, this road is an extremely important arterial access link for 90% of tourists to Kyogle at this entry point of the Northern Rivers. Self-drive tourism is the areas only marketable opportunity at present. However neighbouring Councils have shown interest in this route becoming a heavy vehicle corridor for industry, which would severely impact our tourism industry and put the priority on rail as the safest means of travel in the future.

2.0 Proposal

Improved rail service

Infrastructure Australia has identified the benefits and need to improve freight rail services. The TRAIN project is a major cross border transport network improvement strategy that the potential to significantly improve commuter rail services as well as freight. There is an equal and ethical social responsibility to consider improvements to move people as well as freight.

Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of this proposal is to point out the most immediate and cost effective methods for the NSW or Queensland State Governments to introduce, independently or through a cooperative cross border joint venture, improved commuter rail services within the fastest growing region in Australia.

Cross Border Cooperative Projects:

Cross Border cooperative project participation between NSW and Qld State Governments have proven successful in the past with tourism projects, Cross Border road and rail projects need equal consideration, as Barry Buffier (2009) Deputy Director General, State & Regional Development and Tourism, Industry & Investment NSW “discussed the need for the upgrade of the Summerland Way and the Mt Lindsay Hwy, to act as an alternative to the Pacific Hwy. This, in turn, will reduce carbon emission and ease urban congestion on coastal roads. There is a need for both Queensland and New South Wales Governments to work closely together, as this project relates to cross border issues”. Successful joint ventures such as the 8 million dollar cooperative tourism marketing project and The Rainforest Way project would be significantly strengthened with the introduction of a passenger/commuter rail service from Brisbane to the Northern Rivers on a realistic timetable. The economic benefit to both The Northern Rivers and South East Queensland Regions of Australia would be a trigger to provoke regional investment and lessen visitor’s carbon footprints even further.

Rational, Needs analysis and benefits:

Patronage is low on the existing XPT service and the reason for this is simple, it runs to an inconvenient time table and is difficult to use by those who most need a ‘Day Trip’ service. Kyogle for example is a 2 hour rail journey to Roma Street Brisbane, but a 7 hour bus journey via connecting services, leaving Kyogle at 9:10am and arriving in Brisbane at 4:00pm. Current XPT services run at inconvenient times as it passes through Kyogle at 4:22am and returns at 9:32am the same day, requiring an overnight stay for commuters/travellers to Brisbane. The inconvenience of the timetable and added expense for accommodation makes this transport option extremely unattractive and does not promote this service to be fully utilized.

A real need has been identified for a return to a ‘Day Trip Commuter Service’ since the change from the Brisbane Limited daily service to the inconvenient XPT service. The support for the service will be significant as the removal of a convenient rail service to Brisbane has severely affected people who most require day trips to Brisbane. A two way day trip service out of and into Brisbane would benefit both South East Queensland and Northern Rivers economies equally.

With NSW and Queensland State Governments actively participating in successful joint ventures such as the 8 million dollar cooperative tourism marketing project and The Rainforest Way, these projects would be significantly strengthened with the introduction of a passenger/commuter rail service from Brisbane to the Northern Rivers of NSW on a realistic timetable. The economic benefit to both The Northern Rivers and South East Queensland Regions of Australia would be a trigger to provoke regional investment. The introduction of this vital transport service would realise significant social and economic benefits to the regions identified. Brisbane is approximately two and a half (2 ½) hours train travel from the Northern Rivers. A train service between these two destinations would provide a significant transport service that would benefit both regions significantly reducing congestion on rural local road networks and reducing the regions carbon footprint.

South East Queensland has been identified as our largest tourism market as the Northern Rivers is significant to SE Qld, the future opportunities provided by the introduction of a commuter rail service would be diverse and extensive.

Immediate Opportunities & Benefits:

The introduction of extremely marketable 'Day Trip' Commuter Rail service will stimulate a dramatic increase in passenger numbers for Countrylink Northern Rivers to Brisbane services. The introduction of these services will be the stimulus for significant and sustainable economic development providing considerable local economic benefit to both the Northern Rivers and South East Queensland. Retirees are relocating in-land with no intention of leaving; this provides opportunities in new industry and service areas such as Aged Care and Retirement Villages. Addressing the absence of buses and trains in the Northern Rivers area is a key point within the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan.

"The Northern Rivers region includes the centres of Tweed Heads, Lismore, Ballina, Casino, Kyogle, Grafton and Byron Bay. It has a population of around 244,000. The region has both high employment and population growth, supported by migration from Sydney, regional NSW and South East Queensland. The high population and employment growth in South East Queensland attracts Northern Rivers residents across the border as commuters. The growth of the Gold Coast-Tweed major city will also create strong demand for transport connections. The concentration of employment in service industries in Tweed and Lismore is increasing local congestion". (Transport NSW 2012)

A report in the Australian Property Investor (API) magazine in September 2006 stated that, "The population of the Far North Coast of NSW has grown by 2500 people a year for the past five years or nearly seven people a day". Inland locations like Kyogle Council LGA will significantly benefit from the NSW Government's 2006-31 Far North Coast Regional Strategy; "The NSW Government's strategy for the far north coast aims to protect the coastline from excessive development. That means that inland towns like Casino and Kyogle will pick up a substantial share of the expected population and jobs growth". (API 2006).

Transport NSW (2012) has identified sustained growth will place increasing demands on the transport system. The Pacific Highway Upgrade is proceeding in the region. There is a need to address east-west access for high productivity vehicles. Investigations are being conducted into the resumption of the Casino-Murwillumbah rail service and extensions to South East Queensland. The proposed future improvements will take time and time is what the Northern Rivers does not have, the time for action is upon us.

“Transport provides access to jobs and essential services such as health care and education as well supporting social contact. Consequently, transport planning decisions have significant and diverse impacts on equity of opportunity. The quality and availability of transport affects people’s social and economic opportunities and their quality of life. Inadequate transport services can lead to dependency on cars and areas of concentrated social disadvantage. An important objective of the NSW Government is to deliver a transport system that is equitable, affordable and accessible to all”. (Transport NSW 2012)

The Federal Government’s focus on nation-building, through the establishment of Infrastructure Australia and the Building Australia Fund, provides the Northern Rivers with an opportunity to argue strongly for transport projects which strengthen the local economy and create jobs. (Saffin J. 2009)

Cost Recovery:

The cost of running any of the three services identified over a 2½ hour period is difficult to estimate, initial investment would be required to introduce any of the services listed previously. It is estimated that a twice daily Commuter Rail Service between the Northern Rivers and Brisbane would receive \$1,916,250.00 in ticket sales in the first year, projecting that 150 passengers (37.5 per trip) used the service a day at a ticket price of \$35.00 return.

Commuter demographic:

The demographic of potential commuters is varied, ranging from the elderly seeking safe efficient transport for medical appointments, to youth seeking connectivity with the City. The Northern Rivers largest tourism market segments from South East Queensland, being ‘short-stay’, ‘weekend getaway’, or ‘Visiting Friends & Relatives’. Connectivity to employment and educational opportunities will see an increase in this type of commuter. Professionals and Business people will have access to fast effective transport networks to conduct business in the City or regional areas. This would eliminate the need to drive to meetings on already congested road networks and allow time to prepare for meetings while travelling.

Tourism

Benefits of Tourism:

Measurements of the combined direct and indirect contribution of tourism to Gross State Product (GSP) showed New South Wales in the lead with \$23.5 billion followed by Victoria at \$15.7 billion and Queensland with \$15.5 billion. Tourism in New South Wales directly (162,530) and indirectly (112,930) employs more people in tourism specific and tourism-related industry sectors. The research also provides data on which tourism-specific and tourism-related industry sectors are driving direct tourism employment. Across all states and territories direct tourism employment is highest in the ‘Retail trade’ sector (125,600 people nationally) followed by ‘Accommodation’ 71,700 with ‘Cafés and restaurants’ among the top five employment sectors for all states and territories. (STCRC 2009) Presently most experiences sought in Kyogle Council LGA are nature based. Branded the ‘Gateway to the Rainforest’ Kyogle Council LGA is the hub of a rural region surrounded by World Heritage listed National Parks. Primary Industries were prosperous and sustained the local economy up until the early 1970’s. Since that time a decline in timber resources and a significant market shift for our dairy and beef industries has influenced a decline in the reliance on these industries to sustain the local economy. Tourism has become a significant value adding supportive industry in boosting the local economy.

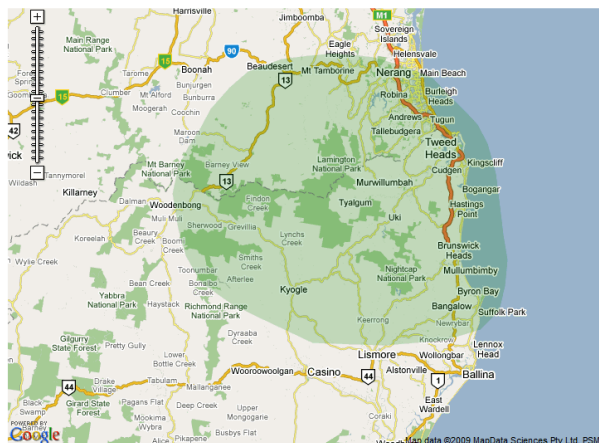
Local Tourism Product:

Kyogle Council LGA can offer visitors exquisite B&B, Hotel, Motel, Farmstay, Retreats to Nature based camping adventure experiences. The World Heritage listed Border Ranges National Park is central to the nature based experience sought by visitors. Increasing numbers of visitors are coming via already busy rural road networks, forced to use their own vehicle as there is no alternative transport infrastructure in place. This has caused significant social impacts on rural communities with visitors unaware of everyday rural activities encountered on rural road networks. With the decline of primary industries as a sustainable economic driver for the region, tourism is becoming a significant supportive industry in the economic sustainability of the local area, allowing value-adding across a diverse section of the local and regional economic community.

Marketing:

Public interest is extremely enthusiastic, positive and encouraging for the introduction and return to Day Trips to Brisbane from Northern Rivers. South East Queensland is by far the highest proportion of visitor numbers into the Northern Rivers, the highest majority Visiting Friends and Relatives. This is a significant target market for rail travel and numbers would undoubtedly increase with the convenience of Day Trip services. Marketing is not restricted to domestic travellers and significant leverage can be obtained through linking with the National Landscapes 'Australia's Green Cauldron' initiative. Designed to target international visitors and direct them into South East Queensland and the Northern Rivers region of NSW. Australia's Green Cauldron is the remnants of an ancient shield volcano that is now a living Gondwana World Heritage rainforest.

Australia's Green Cauldron



(Source:<http://www.australia.com/campaigns/nationallandscapes/AustraliasGreenCauldron.htm>)

This vast caldera stretches from Byron Bay to the Gold Coast and west towards the Great Dividing Range. Connection with Brisbane International Airport via the Airtrain provides opportunities to market the Fly/Rail/Coach travel International visitors are familiar with.



Increased Baggage/Luggage Capacity:

Increased luggage capacity will be required to cater for the increasing Mountain Bike Adventure Seeker market as only three boxed bikes are permitted per train at present which significantly inhibits marketability. Shoppers with larger parcels would also benefit from increased capacity, as well as International and Domestic travellers using the service to connect to flights to and from Brisbane. Increased luggage capacity would also improve the marketability of the service for domestic holiday makers.

Other opportunities and market segments include:-

**The introduction of a Brisbane to Northern Rivers Commuter Rail Service;
Would:-**

- Aid future Cross Border transport network solutions in the fastest growing regions in Australia, NSW Northern Rivers & South East Qld;
- Relieve the traffic congestion on Coastal & Rural Local roads and reduce social impacts from increased visitation in private vehicles;
- Provide opportunities for economic development in regional areas, Tourism has become a significant value adding supportive industry in boosting the local economy;
- Provide significant positive social impacts by immediate improvement in local, Regional & Interstate transport networks;
- Reduce the regions carbon footprint with less private vehicle movement;

Economic

Employment opportunities will be provided with the development of Bromelton Industrial precinct generating an estimated 35,000 jobs as part of the Great South East Queensland Strategic Plan. Bromelton is on the North Coast line to Brisbane approximately one hour north of Kyogle by rail. If we have a rail service that ran to a convenient time table to take advantage of this opportunity it would have significant social and economic impacts for Kyogle. September 09, 2008 - The Queensland Government has declared a new State Development Area at Bromelton near Beaudesert, which will preserve land for future industry in a dedicated area separated from residential developments. The area has been earmarked for industrial development since the late 1970s, and was first identified as an investigation area and then later as a Major Development Area, in the South East Queensland Regional Plan 2005-2026.

Potential for the State Development Area includes:

- Large lot industrial uses requiring rail access
- Freight and logistics operations (major intermodal freight terminal)
- Large scale distribution/warehousing centres with road/rail requirements.
- Industry support services, freight and logistics/transport servicing depots.

Day Trip opportunities for South East Qld into the Northern Rivers would be the trigger to encourage associated tourism product development for our local area which would benefit visitors and locals alike. This would not only boost the local economy and provide sustainability into the Tourism Industry; it would also significantly reduce our Carbon Footprint with visitors not having to drive private vehicles to get here. The ability to control visitor movements around the area is significant to our Destination Management Strategies and reduces potential conflict between local farmers and visitors in 4WD's using rural local roads with little or no understanding of everyday rural activities and what to lookout for.

Opportunities In the Northern Rivers:

- Encourage Investment in Local/Regional Tourism Product;
- Tourism: Daytrip guided tours, 'Ride the Range' and other Mountain Bike Experiences;
- Linking with a Casino to Byron Rail Trail;
- Or a reinstated Casino to Murwillumbah Rail Link;
- Photography excursions, Bird Watching expeditions, Habitat Tours;
- World Heritage National Park tours;
- School Excursions;
- Daytrips, Markets & Shopping Excursions;
- Attend Events Cultural and Sporting;
- Overnight and Weekend Getaways;
- Agritourism 'Eat at Local Kyogle Dinning outlets for regional cuisine';
- Theme Trains (KATS, armature theatrical troop);
- Family Train Trips;
- Tourism promotion on the train journeys (North & South) through the display of audio/visual presentations while traveling extends opportunities.

Opportunities To South East Queensland & Brisbane:

- Attend Events Cultural and Sporting;
- Daytrips, Markets & Shopping Excursions;
- School Excursions;
- Overnight and Weekend Getaways;
- Business Trips: Allows for work to be done that could not while driving;
- Medical Appointments;
- Employment;
- Higher Education;
- Theme Trains;
- Family Train Trips;



Newcastle Historic Railmotor visit 2011

NBN

With the impending introduction of the NBN High Speed Broad band regional Australia will be competitive with larger centres with investment and lifestyle choices as long as the basic infrastructure is present, highest of list of priorities are regional transport networks.

“Once built, the NBN has the potential to transform the way we do business by helping businesses overcome the barriers of time and distance. We expect that access to superfast broadband will give businesses the opportunity to increase productivity, save time and money and the ability to compete on a global scale. The services provided over the NBN are expected to promote business efficiency, and may open up opportunities for businesses to hold meetings or liaise with suppliers and agents across Australia online - potentially saving time and costs associated with travelling. The NBN has the potential to help Australia become an international leader in educational innovation. The opportunities for advancements in medical technology are one of the most exciting aspects of the NBN. Enabling expanded access to care through interactive internet consultations, supporting telemedicine and addressing health shortages through internet-based care are some of the ways that services are expected to be offered over the NBN to address the medical gap between urban and regional Australians”. (NBNco 2010)

Social

There is a great deal of Economic Development opportunity and Social responsibility presented at this time with a number of retirees settling into the Northern Rivers with no intention of leaving. By 2026 30% of the Northern Rivers population will be over 60 years of age. Northern Rivers Area Health is stretched to the limit already and Kyogle certainly does not have the services these people will require. “By improving the accessibility of rail service to Brisbane, this would surely decrease the pressure on the Northern Area Health Service for people who need access to specialist services in Lismore. A fast and efficient rail service would increase the number of day visitors to Kyogle and, if marketed with tour or bus companies who could transport people to rain forest areas or village trips, would make an attractive alternative to coastal trips”. (Franklin F. 2010).

- Recent ABS figures released indicate that Kyogle has increase population from -.1% to .3% an increase of .4%. This is in line with regional predictions Lismore .6%, Ballina .7%, Byron 1% and Tweed 1.7%. The move west is on! Restricted coastal development, coastal traffic congestion and real estate prices are as predicted encouraging people to look further west into the hinterland for property. This creates an issue for our East West Transport Connectivity;

Population growth in the Northern Rivers region will be influenced by:

1. Current population growth rates. With a current population of 265,000, the Northern Rivers region has been growing at a rate of over 4,000 people (1.6%) per year, one of the highest rates of growth in an Australian region outside the capital cities.
2. Land available for development, that is, the extent of the region's land resource and any additional re-zonings that are underway. Population forecasts suggest that the region's population will reach 348,880 by the year 2031. It is assumed that enough land will be released to accommodate this anticipated population growth within the next 25 years.

3. The region's attractiveness is primarily related to climate/lifestyle (youth and retirees and semi-retirees, etc.), job opportunities (young singles, young couples and families) and market potential (businesses and industries). Professional workers, who are also dubbed 'knowledge workers' and the 'creative class' have a preference for 'lifestyle' regions/locations thus there will be a propensity for entrepreneurs and knowledge workers to move to the region to seek a better lifestyle, employment and/or start up their own businesses. However, as the number of people of working age retiring increase, there is a corresponding decline in the proportion of the region's working age population. This has the potential to impact negatively on regional productivity and unemployment.
4. Insofar as out migration is concerned; the biggest drain on the region's population is likely to be from young singles leaving for employment, higher education and for life broadening experiences. (RIEP 2006)

Environmental

The immediate reduction of the regions carbon footprint would be evident in the reduction of private vehicle traffic into and out of the region. At present the majority visitors and commuters must rely on private vehicles using congested road networks to move around the region. Encouraging people to use the rail service would address a number of issues.

- The ability to control visitor movements within environmentally fragile areas will assist in the preservation and protection of these areas;
- The immediate reduction in carbon emissions would only enhance the Northern Rivers Clean and Green status;
- Reduce the potential conflict between local farmers and visitors in 4WD's using rural local roads with little or no understanding of everyday rural activities and what to lookout for;
- The environmental biodiversity within the Northern Rivers is the second most recognised in Australia. Protect the regions World Heritage and other natural assets is this generation's responsibility for future generations and environmental sustainability;
- The future economic benefits for the region by preserving and protecting these environmental assets will be realised over time.

Casino to Murwillumbah line:

The existing Northern Rivers Countrylink Rail/Coach distribution network is considered sufficient to cater for the needs of commuters in the short term with the introduction of a twice daily service on the existing North Coast line. However, with the predicted regional population growth re-establishing the Casino to Murwillumbah rail service and the planned extension into the Gold Coast network is seen as essential to cater for future needs. The NSW State Government has appointed an Infrastructure Consultant to lead a Feasibility Study into the Casino to Murwillumbah Line. This proposal will be forwarded to be included within this study as a supportive element, rather than an instead-of, proposal for consideration in future Northern Rivers Rail transport needs.

4.0 The Commuter Rail Service Options

Option 1 – Adjust Countrylink XPT Time Tables :



Countrylink XPT

What could be considered the most cost effective solution would be to adjust the time tables of the two existing Countrylink XPT trains that service the Northern Rivers from Sydney. Two XPT services come into the Northern Rivers from Sydney daily, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The morning XPT travels through to Brisbane, but is little use for day trips as it begins the return journey one hour later. The afternoon XPT once serviced Casino to Murwillumbah and now terminates in Casino for the return journey to Sydney, again little use to commuters further north. If this service was adjusted to continue onto Brisbane it would be the affordable solution to a major problem as per the time table below. Countrylink XPT trains are not well patronized from the Northern Rivers to Brisbane at present, basically because of the inconvenient time table and the major passenger market segment, 'Day Trippers' cannot use the service.

The proposed time table adjustment to existing XPT services:-

Morning XPT		Afternoon XPT	
Sydney – Brisbane		Sydney – Brisbane	
Sydney	5:12pm	Sydney	2:15am
Casino	4:55am	Casino	1:44pm
Kyogle	5:22am	Kyogle	2:15pm
Bromelton	6:30am	Bromelton	3:15pm
Brisbane	7:30am	Brisbane	4:15pm
Brisbane – Sydney		Brisbane – Sydney	
Brisbane	8:30am	Brisbane	5:00pm
Bromelton	9:30am	Bromelton	6:00pm
Kyogle	10:28am	Kyogle	7:00pm
Casino	10:53am	Casino	7:30pm
Sydney	10:06pm	Sydney	6:52am

The Queensland Government has indicated it would be preferable if Countrylink services avoided the congested Brisbane urban rail networks at peak periods. Due to the economic opportunities of providing convenient commuter rail services to the future industrial development of Bromelton for employment opportunities, this would be unavoidable. Integration of this proposed service into Queensland Rails time table is one possible solution.

Option 2 – Introduction of rail Motor Services:



Endeavour Railcars



Hunter Railcars

The introduction of Rail Motor services similar to those which run from Sydney to the Hunter and Illarwarra would not only provide much needed Commuter Rail Services between Roma Street Brisbane and Casino Northern Rivers NSW, but it would also dramatically reduce the regions Carbon Footprint and provide economic stimulus in the fastest growing region in Australia. The opportunity for investment in associated business and infrastructure, along with investment from new residents' relocation to a more accessible area would be a significant boost for local economic sustainability. The kudos extended to Governments involved would be measured by the economic prosperity stimulated similar to the opening of the line in 1910 and the extension to Brisbane in 1930.

Option 3 – Install a third rail for Queensland Rail:



Mrs. Moore (wife of the 23rd Qld Premier A.E. Moore) cuts the ribbon welcoming the first Sydney to Brisbane Train 1930.

Encourage Queensland Rail to continue installing a third rail extending from Salisbury to Bromelton and onto Casino to allow their narrower gauged light rail to service the area. Queensland Rail Travel is working to drive economic value to Regional Queensland. Cross Border transport networks would benefit greatly from this major tourism investment of \$189M in new trains. Strong dispersal throughout Queensland would be extended to include the Northern Rivers. (QR 2012) It is estimated that by 2025, one quarter of Australia's population will live within the coastal region from Hervey Bay to Coffs Harbour (BB 2008). Restrictions on coastal development and increased house prices encourage overflow migration to hinterland areas.

This method would place Northern Rivers into the Queensland Rail (QR) Regional network and into QR timetables, eliminating the issue of a Northern Rivers to Brisbane service operating outside the Brisbane commuter rail network during peak periods as this service would be included.

5.0 Conclusion and recommendations

This document has highlighted the immediate and critical need for improved Cross Border Rail Services and the ongoing benefits to local transport networks. It is understood that the NSW Government has significant issues with its Sydney Metropolitan rail network and likewise the Queensland Government are focused on its Brisbane, Intra-State and Gold Coast rail networks. This leaves the Northern Rivers in a black spot in the middle. It is recommended that both NSW and Queensland State Governments either independently or within a Cross Border joint venture, with assistance of the Federal Government, give serious consideration to the options put forward in this document.

Public support for the introduction of a twice daily commuter rail service between the Northern Rivers and Brisbane has indicated that this service would be received with the same amount of fanfare and gratitude towards the Government(s) who provide the service as that received by the opening of the Kyogle to Brisbane rail extension in 1930.



The Centenary Train June 25th 2010

Appendix 1:

Booz Allen Hamilton review and restructure

“In 1988, the newly elected Greiner State Government commissioned a report into the SRA by American consultants Booz Allen Hamilton. The report, delivered in 1989 recommended widespread job losses, up to 8000, including the withdrawal of staff from 94 country railway stations, withdrawing services on the Nyngan- Bourke line, Queanbeyan - Cooma line and Glen Innes- Wallangarra line, the axing of several country passenger services (the *Canberra XPT*, the *Silver City Comet* to Broken Hill and various diesel locomotive hauled services) and the removal of sleeper trains from services to Brisbane and Melbourne. The report also recommended the removal of all country passenger services and small freight operations, but the government did not consider this to be politically feasible.^[1] The SRA was divided into business units - CityRail, responsible for suburban and Inter-urban railways; CountryLink, responsible for country passenger services; FreightRail, responsible for freight services; and Rail Estate, responsible for rail property. Upon the formation of the business units in 1988, CityRail adopted a black and yellow 'L7' logo (later to become blue and yellow), and Countrylink adopted its present now old blue and white 'Mountains' logo and livery”.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_Rail_Authority_of_New_South_Wales)

Appendix 2:

Regional transport links miss out

8th February 2012

A TRANSPORT plan connecting rail, train and bus services on the Northern Rivers has not been funded by the NSW state government. The Northern Rivers Regional Organisation of Councils (NOROC) had been lobbying the NSW government for the development of a Northern Rivers regional transport strategy. The organisation represents Lismore, Kyogle, Tweed, Clarence Valley, Byron, Ballina and Richmond Valley councils and is a member of an advisory group providing input to the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan. NOROC president Cr Phillip Silver said he had hoped the NSW Government would commit to a plan for the Northern Rivers this year. However, he said: "The NSW Government has said it wants to complete the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan before it embarks on regional plans.". He said he was disappointed with the decision, as a lack of connectivity in transport infrastructure meant Northern Rivers commuters lose out. "A classic example is the CountryLink buses. They serve rail passengers out of Casino but part of the agreement is they're not able to pick up intra-regional passengers," Cr Silver said. He will ask the government to expand a study on the cost of restoring the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line to cover other transport. "They're in the region looking at transport issues so we will ask if our integrated study could be incorporated." Cr Silver said there are great opportunities to link transport in the Northern Rivers with growth areas in Queensland. "It's the integration of road, rail and aviation for us that's critical," Cr Silver said. "We're a little bit unique compared to the other regions in the state in our relationship with Queensland so we want a plan that reacts and responds to what they're doing there also."

(<http://www.northernstar.com.au/story/2012/02/08/regional-transport-links-miss-out-on-state-funds/>)

Appendix 3: **Conservation Architect Plans for the sympathetic refurbishment of the Kyogle Railway Station**

Kyogle Railway Station Community Project:

In 2002 the local community presented a proposal to State Rail (NSW) for the sympathetic refurbishment of the historically significant Kyogle Railway Station. This proposal presented the opportunity of transforming the Railway Station into a Transit Centre for the local area, coordinated by a local Travel Agent with further opportunities of using the buildings for “The Last Stop Café”, a centre for coordinating local and regional bus networks, and the significant area of the Rail precinct provided future opportunities for the development of a Rail Museum.

Railcorp Representation:

Railcorp sent representation through Mr. Stuart Sharpe State Rail Heritage and Mr. Ray Holbrook Rail Estate to meet with community representatives and consider the proposal, to refurbish the Kyogle Railway Station into a Transit Centre for the area. The historical significance of the Railway Station was highlighted in that it was built in a short period when Australian Rail Architecture was prominent, English design influenced early rail architecture and later designs were influenced by American methods. Kyogle Railway Station is significant because it is one of the last on an active rail line. Presently not staffed, the once very active station is locked and only used as a drop off, pick up platform for the Sydney to Brisbane XPT, leaving it very vulnerable to vandalism. The security provided by bringing the Station back to life was enthusiastically embraced by Railcorp representatives and Conservation Architect plans were drawn for the redevelopment (See Appendix 1). Growing Kyogle a community economic development committee have agreed to enter into a licence agreement with Railcorp which will allow the project to continue. The introduction of the proposed rail service would greatly improve the prospects of this significant economic opportunity to proceed.

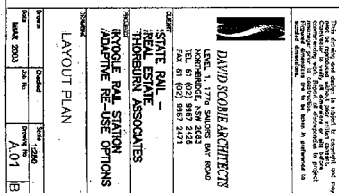


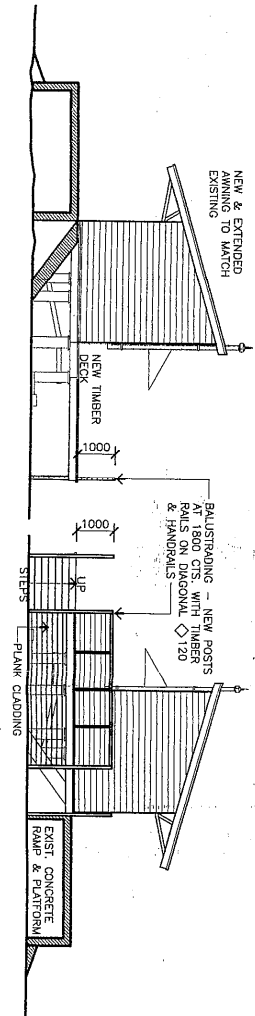
(XPT & Southern Spirit trains at Kyogle Railway Station, Northern Rivers, NSW)

Centenary Celebrations:

On 26th January 2010 Kyogle Railway Station celebrated its Centenary with a celebration event and the re-enactment of the Official Opening. 300 locals and visitors attended these celebrations which highlighted the significance and esteem of the station to the community. Those attending were shown the planned refurbishment of the Station and a draft of this document with all who viewed them being very supportive of both projects.

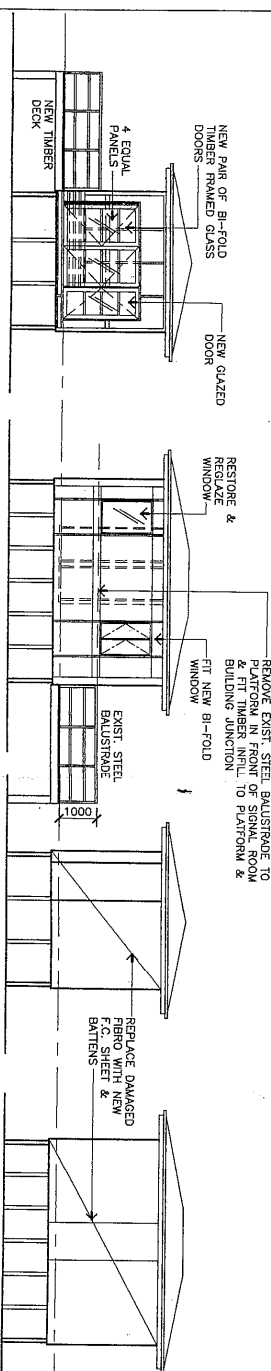






1 END ELEVATION
1:100

2 END ELEVATION/SECTION
1:100

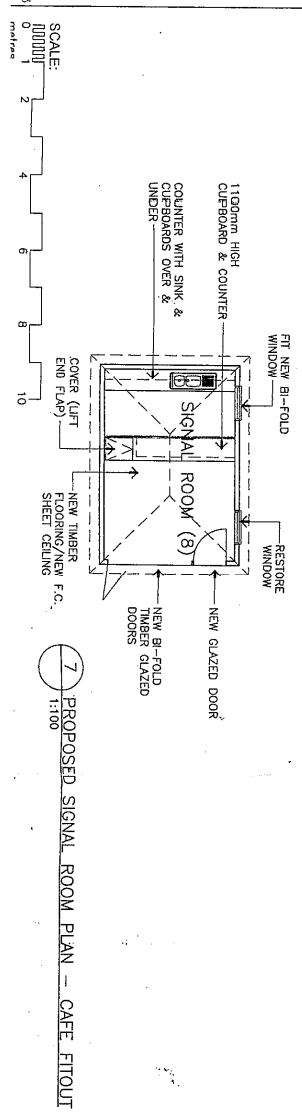


3 PROPOSED STATION ELEVATION
1:100

4 PROPOSED PLATFORM ELEVATION
1:100

5 EXISTING SOUTH ELEVATION
1:100

6 EXISTING TOWN ELEVATION
1:100



7 PROPOSED SIGNAL ROOM PLAN - CAFE FITOUT
1:100

<p>DAVID SCORE ARCHITECTS LEVEL 1, 1770 SLOANES BAY ROAD LONDON, NSW 2003 TEL 61 (02) 9587 2471 FAX 61 (02) 9587 2471</p>	
<p>STATE RAIL - REAL ESTATE PROBEN ASSOCIATES</p>	
<p>KNOX RAIL STATION ADAPTIVE RE-USE OPTIONS</p>	
<p>STATION BUILDING SIGNALS ROOM</p>	
Scale	1:100
Date	10/10/10
Drawn by	David Score
Checked by	David Score

Appendix 4:
Total Visitor Number Statistics
For the
Kyogle Visitor Information Centre
From Sept 2006
To 21st March 2011

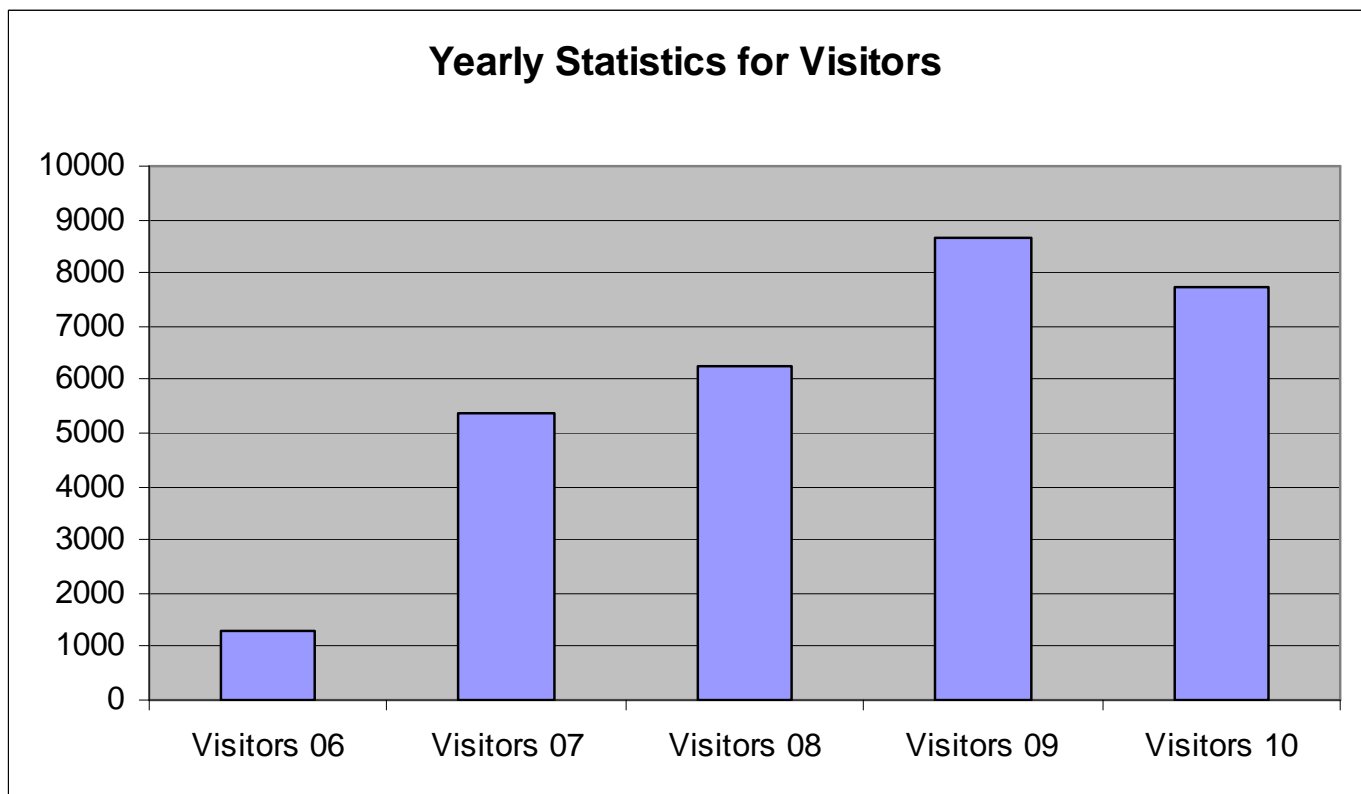
The value of tourism:

The value of tourism to the local area is calculated using the following formula:-

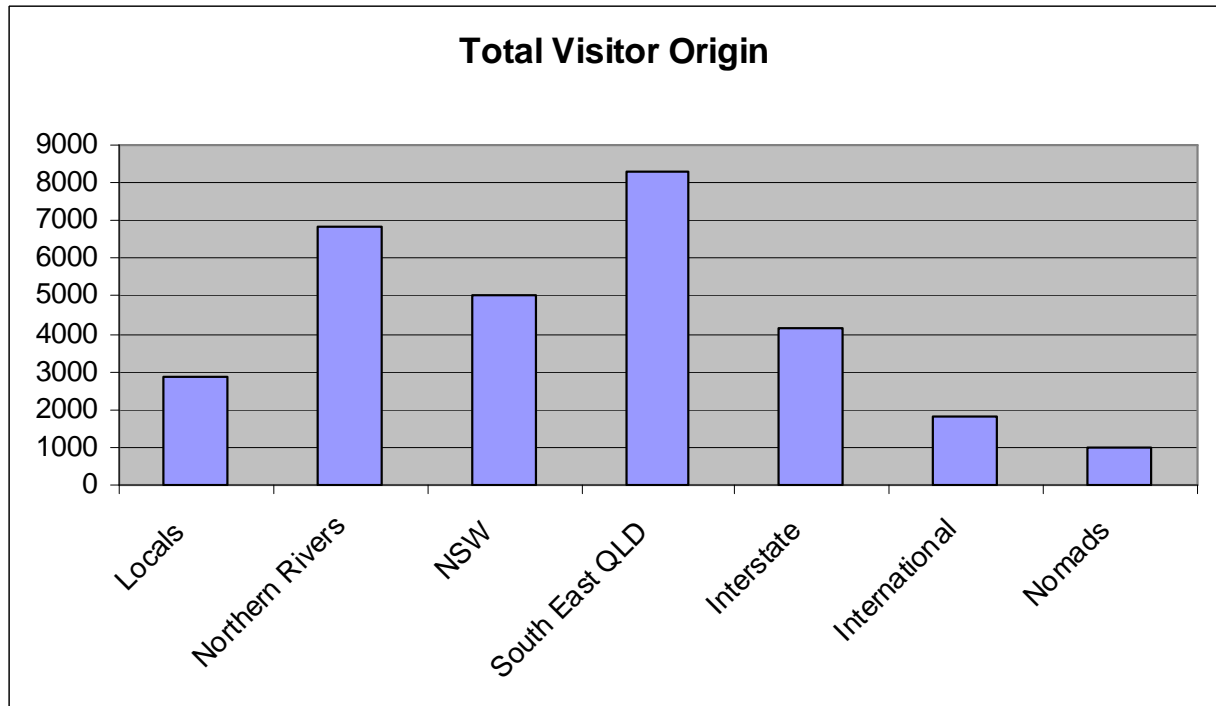
The number of through the door visitors to Kyogle Visitor Information Centre is multiplied by a predicted State average of eight visitors who do not call into Visitor Centres. This figure is then multiplied by an average \$72 spend and an added 35% for overnight stays. So since September 2006 to 21st March 2011 to value of tourism is:-

Visitors	Variable	Actual Visitors	Eco Benefit	Total Value
30048 x 8 =	240,384 x \$72=	\$17,307,648	+35%=	\$23,365,324

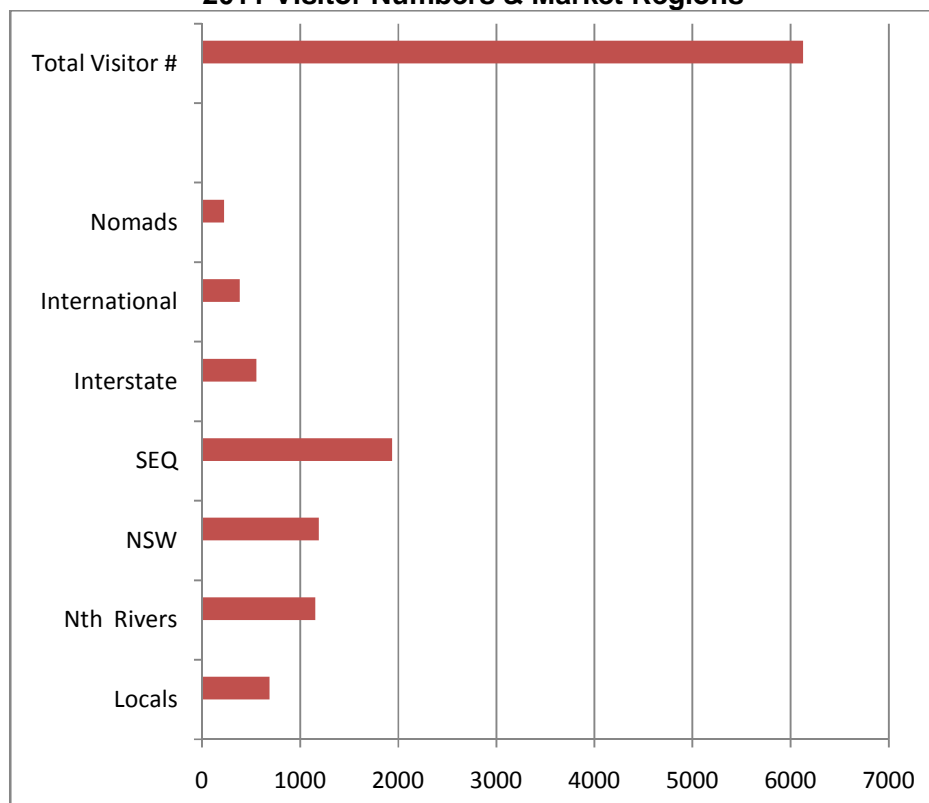
Number of Visitors 'Through the VIC Door' per year



Distribution of Visitor Market Regions



2011 Visitor Numbers & Market Regions



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