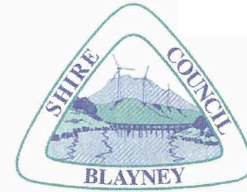


**Submission
No 141**

INQUIRY INTO INTER-REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Organisation: Blayney Shire Council
Name: Mr G A Wilcox
Position: General Manager
Date Received: 25/05/2012

Blayney Shire Council



14 May 2012

The Chair
State and Regional Development Committee
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYNDEY NSW 2000

Attn: The Hon. Andrew Gee MP

RE: INQUIRY INTO INTER-REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Dear Sir

Reference is made to your correspondence of March 2012 seeking input to the above inquiry.

Council thanks you for the opportunity to provide input to this important state committee. It considers the current transport discussion being held across NSW as commendable, and the matter of inter regional public transport of particular importance to Blayney and regional NSW.

As a member of the Central NSW Councils (CENTROC), Council commends to you the work undertaken by that organisation and requests that you consult with CENTROC, as there is extensive knowledge and experience within its membership available to provide further advice.

About Blayney Shire

Blayney Shire has an area of 1,524.7 square kilometres and is located in the Central Tablelands of New South Wales, approximately three hours by road from the centre of Sydney. The principal town in the Shire is Blayney, situated some 37km southwest of Bathurst and approximately 244km by road from Sydney. It is the centre of a district, which stretches east to Bathurst, southwest to Cowra and north to Orange. Blayney Shire is comprised of a number of villages including Millthorpe; Carcoar; Mandurama; Lyndhurst; Neville; Newbridge; Hobbys Yards and Barry. The Shire sits at an altitude of 850 metres above sea level.

At the 2006 census the Shire had a population of 6,593 persons equally distributed between men and women. As the table shows the Shire has a relatively young population and even distribution across the age groups. The median age was 39 years compared to 37 for Australia. Of all occupied properties at the time of the 2006 census 72% were family households compared to 67% for Australia.

Council owns and maintains 751 kilometres of road throughout the Shire. Transport is a key issue and the Shire is serviced by the Mid-Western Highway that links Bathurst (35km) in the east with Marsden to the west, and services the larger regional centre of Cowra (69km) south of Blayney. Blayney is also linked to Orange via a road to the north-west. Other roads provide connections to Canberra via Goulburn and Forbes via Canowindra. In addition to road linkages there is also rail. The Main Western Railway traverses the Shire providing a daily commuter service between Dubbo and Sydney stopping at Blayney. At Blayney there is also a link to the main southern line at Demondrille via Cowra.

As identified in "Blayney Shire 2025 *All the pieces together* – The strategic plan of the Blayney Shire community, the Community has identified that it needs Improved access to community and public transport between villages and centres.

Council considers that community equity must be enhanced to support rural and remote areas.

The availability of public transport both within the region and between regions is restricted and further restricts the ability of the public to move about in an efficient and sustainable manner.

Consideration: The provision of Country Link services that supports the aged, and physically impaired members of the community in undertaking business, and attending appointments in local and regional centres.

A key concern for the Blayney Shire community, is the lack of rail access (Country Link) between Sydney and regional areas, further limiting community equity. Existing services from Dubbo to Sydney via Blayney are poorly supported due to current timetables and journey times. A change of priority, that provides people the ability to travel into and out of Sydney in the one day, would enhance patronage.

Consideration: The development of a regional fast train network that is integrated into any future transport services to the proposed second Sydney airport.

Council notes that many residents work in adjoining regional centres such as Orange and Bathurst, but it is also worth recognising that there are many that work in Blayney and reside outside the Shire. The provision of selected services to historic villages would promote economic growth and provide people with alternatives on where they choose to live and work.

Consideration: The provision of a daily commuter (Country Link) rail service between Orange and Bathurst stopping at Blayney, with selected services stopping in the historic villages of Millthorpe and Newbridge.

Road connections (Bells Line of Road and Great Western Highway) to the Sydney basin provide the only linkages for Central West residents and businesses. These roads are considered the most dangerous in Australia and require traffic relief and road improvements. Integrating regional public transport between the Central West and Sydney, would help ease traffic congestion across the Blue Mountains, and provide further community equity, that supports real transport alternatives for the aged and physically impaired.

Consideration: The daily commuter (Country Link) rail service could extend to Lithgow and be integrated with existing electric services to Sydney.

There has recently been extensive discussion within the national media on the need for a second Sydney airport and the provision of regional air services into Kingsford Smith.

Aside from the debate on where regional air services will be based in Sydney in the future, the provision of fast reliable public transport connections must be ensured. Transport modes must be integrated with simple, and accessible mode changes.

Consideration: Any second Sydney Airport must be supported with a very fast rail connection to the Sydney CBD, with simple and accessible interchanges.

As identified in the Transportation Master Plan discussion paper and the South Eastern NSW Road Freight Study 2010, NSW is expected to see a growth in road freight over the coming 20 - 30 years. With the *“NSW goal being to double the proportion of container freight movement by rail through NSW ports by 2020”*.

An alternative to road transport is the use of Country Link services to carry light freight, better utilising existing and future services and potentially ensuring greater viability.

Council acknowledges and supports the goal of increasing rail as a viable freight transport mode.

Blayney is located at the northern end of the currently non-operational line that provides a link from the main western line through to Demondrille on the main southern line, via Cowra.

Blayney Shire Council in conjunction with Cowra, Young, Harden and Weddin council's has recently completed work with Transport for NSW (TfNSW) on a report into the viability of the Blayney – Demondrille railway, as part of the Cowra Lines Ministerial Taskforce.

Council highlights the current work being undertaken with NSW Trade and Investment and TfNSW to complete the governance proposals and identify

potential investment opportunities in the line. Council considers this work an ideal example of how local councils can actively engage in the improvement of inter regional public transport, despite the primary focus in this case being freight.

Council thanks you for the opportunity to provide input to the Committee's inquiry.

Yours faithfully

GA Wilcox
GENERAL MANAGER