

INQUIRY INTO INTER-REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Organisation: Pepper Design
Name: Mr Simon Blazey
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The Chairman Andrew Gee M.P.

Dear Sir,

I am a Jindabyne Resident, and run a one-man-show graphic design/illustration/web business here in town.

I have many clients in the area, but the bulk of my work comes from clients and agencies in Sydney.

I find myself travelling to from Jindabyne to Sydney (and back) about every five weeks on average. I plan my travel well in advance, so can organise a few days of solid meetings and return to Jindabyne within about a two-day turnaround.

Currently I have two travel options.

(1) I possess a drivers license (I am in my early forties), so can (and generally do) travel by car both ways - about five and a half hours each way, and costs about (\$150 in fuel per trip). Then I have to work out parking and travel in and around Sydney etc.

(2) I can drive to Canberra, park my car and catch a Murray's bus to Sydney, dropping me right at Central Station and can travel freely on public transport. From Canberra, I can also fly which - I have done (generally if my costs are covered - as you don't gain much time), or travel by Train. All good options.

I FAR prefer the second option as; I can work on the bus - on my laptop or sketch ideas (i.e. make money); I can relax; I can sleep- especially after a few days of solid (tiring) meetings; It's statistically safer.

However, trying to do the whole trip from Jindabyne is an impossibility. The public (and private) transport between Jindabyne and Canberra is so bad it may as well not even be here at all. Currently the only service to Cooma runs school days only (i.e. no summer or School holidays), then I have to swap to the Cooma–Canberra Countrylink Service. I don't even consider it an real option. If I was lucky enough to line things up, it would take well over nine hours to do the trip to Sydney, and swap mode-of-transport three times each way. Too hard.

In 2012 I fail to understand why there isn't a daily service Jindabyne–Cooma–Canberra–Sydney. 467km.

In the THIRD WORLD I can get a daily bus service pretty-much anywhere I want - on a clean bus- daily as a minimum.

But as I say, I can work around it by being able to drive. What worries me is that I know a lot of older people in the area whose driving days are numbered (and this IS an issue), and witness the endless amount of travellers and backpackers who can only travel via hitchhiking. In a town whose only reason-for-being is tourism, it's quite frankly- woeful. My parents and in-laws are all in their seventies/early eighties- so are in the firing line for public transport being the better option in the VERY near future, should they desire to come to the region to see their grandkids.

It is a different story in Winter. Granted. The private sector steps-in and offers daily services between The snowfields and Sydney. It's a shame they don't start a few weeks earlier so staff can get to their places or work before the ski season begins. Once again a LOT of staff are backpackers-without-cars.

GETTING to Jindabyne is hard enough, getting AROUND Jindabyne is once again an impossibility. Within 30km of Jindabyne is : Dalgety; Berridale (Breweries and restaurants); Thredbo; Perisher and Mt. Kosciuszko/Charlotte Pass. (Mt. Kosciuszko is Australia's highest mountain). In many countries, a tallest mountain that could be scaled without oxygen or taking ones life into ones hands, would normally be a tourist destination for travellers. Without cars. Like Bridgeclimb, only taller and cheaper). Here it's not even accessible. But I digress.

I find myself picking up a LOT of hitch hikers (which is illegal (and anecdotally - dangerous)) - driving past yet another lost/bewildered backpacker who is worried about getting to Cooma or Canberra - just seems like politeness (and Public Relations for the region!).

As I say- I really cannot believe this is even open to debate, in almost ANY other country this would not even be an issue. I lived in Sydney for a number of years, and the site of empty bus chugging down George Street - is not given a second thought. Yet the sight of a MINI bus pulling out of Jindabyne on a daily trip to Canberra via Cooma, (which would meet another larger service to Sydney) as a daily ritual - would be met with open arms (and wallets) by the community - and the average backpacker- and myself).

Kind Regards,

Simon Blazey
Pepper Design