

**Supplementary
Submission**

No 84a

INQUIRY INTO INTER-REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

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Position: Chair
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STATE AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MY BACKGROUND

- Raised/educated in Sydney
- Professional Engineer with EC NSW – Power Stations
- Lived in Bathurst Region since 1961
- Chairman Rail Action Bathurst

How can inter-regional public transport better serve the needs of Regional NSW?

It is very obvious that one of the major Policy and Strategy drivers for the Government should be the high cost of doing business and living in Sydney – it is becoming one of the greatest social challenges of our time.

To this end Government Policies and Strategies need to recognise the urban sprawl that is taking place in the Sydney Basin is resulting in the following impacts:-

- Health and environmental issues – eg increased dependence on automobiles
- Increased pollution and reliance on fossil fuel – air in the modern suburbs is not necessarily cleaner than air in regional neighbourhoods. The most polluted air is on crowded highways where people in suburbs tend to spend more time
- Increase in traffic and traffic-related fatalities – a heavy reliance on automobiles increases traffic throughout the city as well as automobile crashes, pedestrian injuries and air pollution
- Delays in emergency medical services response times
- Increased obesity
- Decrease in land and water quantity and quality – due to the larger area consumed by sprawling suburbs compared to urban neighbourhoods more farmland and wildlife habitats are displaced per resident
- Increased infrastructure costs – living in larger more spread out spaces generally makes public services more expensive.
- Neighbourhood quality – sprawl erodes quality of life

It is time to let the 'cork out of the bottle'.

Well established and serviced regional communities will encourage people to live in them

The Policies and Strategies of Government need to be focused on Regional Development – focus on providing transport to serve both:-

- Economic Drivers eg:- agriculture, mining, construction utilities, accommodation, education, health and
- Social drivers eg:- employment opportunities, access to services, social inclusion, the aging population and environmental issues

The majority of travel between regions is by private motor vehicle. It is convenient, relatively cheap and fast. Travel by public transport would be a last resort in the regions. For business people it would be used rarely, for the inconvenience and unhelpful timetabling.

The services need to be enhanced to meet passenger needs. If services are not run with a significant focus on meeting passenger needs they will simply not grow, and the current stagnation in the passenger numbers, as demonstrated by the XPT service, will continue.

The affirmative action of the Coalition state Government to form 'Infrastructure NSW' and to prepare the NSW long Term transport Master Plan demonstrates the recognition that infrastructure in NSW needs a substantial overhaul and redeveloping.

However, subsequent to the release of the Infrastructure NSW report I have grave doubts that the group openly recognises the issue, that is, there needs to be an upgrade of Rail services to the Central West, indeed to all of Regional NSW not a downgrade as has been suggested – provide the quality service and the patronage will come. The recent inauguration of the Bathurst Express Rail Service demonstrates this point by passenger numbers (averaging 85 out of Bathurst which is 50% of Train capacity) exceeding expectations.

Bathurst Express Train – it sets a good precedent for the improvement of regional rail services to a level beyond obligatory Countrylink services

JOHN HOLLIS

Chair Rail Action Bathurst