

## **INQUIRY INTO INTER-REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

**Organisation:** Central NSW Councils  
**Name:** Councillor Phyllis Miller OAM  
**Position:** Chair  
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# HOW INTER-REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT CAN BETTER SERVE THE NEEDS OF REGIONAL NEW SOUTH WALES

SUBMISSION



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Centroc's Mission is to be recognised as the lead organisation advocating on agreed regional positions and priorities for Central NSW whilst providing a forum for facilitating regional co-operation and sharing of knowledge, expertise and resources, effectively nurturing sustainable investment and infrastructure development.

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Thankyou for this opportunity for Centroc members to make a submission to the State Government regarding inter-regional public transport.

Centroc is including in its advice both hub and spoke travel leading to destinations like Sydney and Canberra as well advice regarding journeys linking local government areas within our region.

In the first instance our members would like congratulate the State for being generally “on time” for existing services in the region. At the same time members would like to impress upon the State Government that the region would like to have infrastructure including public transport that facilitates development, tourism and relocation from Sydney and Canberra.

There needs to be a root and branch change to the Country Link service that seeks to engage a much greater diversity of passenger. Quite frankly, any person reading this submission should feel that the Country Link Service “meets their needs” where this is currently far from the case. At the moment Country Link inadequately tries to meet the gap in transport needs between those who have cars and those who don’t. Given the social, economic and environmental benefits of having many more market segments using public transport, the current paradigm is more than unfortunate.

In the first instance there are a variety of target markets that Country Link could be servicing where the growth in service of these market segments will grow the cost benefit of delivering services for residents in our communities with their needs for travel for health, education and other reasons. Suggested market segments for targeting include international backpackers (a growing market segment), independent including international travelers and aged travelers. Light freight could also be considered.

Please note that a number of submissions have been made in the past both from individual Centroc members and from Centroc collectively. Most recently advice has been provided to the NSW Transport Masterplan process.

The following advice responds to the heads of consideration.

#### **(a) how CountryLink services can be improved**

Country Link Services can be improved by:

1. recognising that there is a need for “one day journeys” both to Sydney and Canberra from the region and from Sydney, Canberra and the Blue Mountains into the region. The journeys can be for work, health, education, tourism or lifestyle reasons and need to recognise where possible the working day and the holiday weekend. Changes would include both the

timetabling of existing services and the introduction of new services. For example, a person living in the Blue Mountains cannot access Lithgow by electric rail in a timely manner for work purposes;

2. engaging with tourism and peak agencies in regional to development to develop appropriate transport routes, for example through the use of ongoing reference groups where these achieve outcomes;
3. improving the passenger experience through ensuring safety, comfort and cleanliness;
4. in particular introducing new services such as electric rail into Bathurst trialing more frequent services into Orange;
5. looking at better hub and spoke services into Lithgow, Bathurst and Orange;
6. ensuring a bus link for Boorowa;
7. a more expensive fare structure would be tolerated where the existing structure favours “escapees” from some type of life event or pensioners – public transport is viewed a “low rent” service for people who don’t have cars and;
8. ensuring daily bus passenger services from smaller communities into regional centres where the example of Boorowa above is a stand-out gap.

**(b) how network linkages between CountryLink train and coach services can be improved;**

Network linkages between bus and train services could be improved by:

1. ensuring comfortable, well lit, safe, weatherproof waiting areas;
2. ensuring access to food and beverages;
3. looking at the “end of the journey” experience, that includes time, temperature and connection to accommodation and
4. ensuring timetabling, including wait times between modes, is responsive to the customers’ needs.

**(c) the potential for CountryLink services to carry light freight**

So long as it does not impacts on passengers being able to take luggage and be seated, or affect timetabling; using Country Link for light freight purposes is not seen as problematic. The logistics of carrying light freight and a cost benefit analysis would need to be undertaken. Tourism officers in the region provide advice that Country Link buses cannot even accommodate a push-bike so there may be some work required to deliver on this idea.



**(d) how CountryLink can be better utilised to increase tourism in New South Wales;**

Growing tourism through Country Link could occur through:

1. more regular services;
2. servicing more areas;
3. consultation with the tourism industry;
4. linkages with other modes to ensure that "some type of transport mode" is at the other end eg. car rental,
5. offering "pick up and drop off" services along the route so those staying 'on route" do not have to go into town and then cab it back;
6. ensuring timing of the services meets tourists needs for travel in particular to and from Sydney;
7. providing tourism advice to the travelling public including packaging up tourism experiences using public transport – ensuring that the audience matches the experience, for example, the current approach of packages for pensioners do not reflect a 10pm arrival in the region in the freezing cold and....then what happens?;
8. market segmentation and market research to inform packaging. For example international travelers are typically more well-disposed to public transport. The young international backpacker is a case in point – what should the Country Link Service experience be for the fruit picker journeying into Young, Cowra, Bathurst, Cabonne or Orange?
9. enabling and linking pushbike/train/bus tourism experiences (you can't take a bike on a country link bus) and
10. in the first instance, some strategic work is suggested engaging industry and local government in regional areas. Centroc and Central NSW Tourism are happy to provide support in this process.

**(e) how the amount of inter-regional travel undertaken by public transport can be increased;**

As advised above, it appears that the current customer of consideration for Countrylink Services is to meet the needs the pensioner and/or of those without a car. This needs to change if there is to be any real change to the current level of service.

Inter-regional travel could be increased by:

1. consideration of attracting a wider market segment to the service,
2. offering "pick up and drop off" services along the route so those staying 'on route" do not have to go into town and then cab it back;

3. greater regulatory in services;
4. servicing more areas;
5. safe, weatherproof, clean and well lit waiting areas and
6. more “express services” – the time it takes to get particularly to Sydney or Canberra needs to think about comparison with self -drive times;

**(f) the extent to which regional public transport networks are integrated and how they can be better integrated;**

There is some integration of existing services and as advised above, the current service is in time. To better integrate existing services, the following could be considered:

1. there could be a role for existing school bus and community transport options;
2. looking and “journey’s end” options need to be considered (see above)
3. there needs to be a paradigm shift in level of service offered to which market segment with service delivered accordingly, for example service to the international backpacker market and services for work, educational and other purposes;

**(g) the role local councils can play in improving inter-regional public transportation networks;**

Through the Integrated Reporting and Planning process Council consistently receive feedback about the inadequacy of the passenger transport. In this context local government could support the state in its progression if improved Country Link services through:

1. advice to the strategic process where Centroc members would welcome some type of ongoing reference group role;
2. supporting facilitation of any stakeholder processes and;
3. if integration with locally provided modes are considered; then support in the negotiations to deliver best outcomes.

**(h) the type of buses and trains that will be required for the provision of regional passenger services in the future.**

Many of our communities would say “a train would be good” without being particularly descriptive about what the level of service would entail. Communities in Central NSW look upon the dismantling of passenger rail in NSW as a terrible step backward. It is suggested that the root and branch review approach above would provide advice regarding the types of buses and trains where the “types” of services would fall out of of such a strategic process.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback and Centroc representatives would welcome any opportunity to provide further advice.

For more information regarding this Submission please contact the Centroc Executive Officer  
Jennifer Bennett on [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]  
Cr Phyllis Miller OAM  
**Chair**  
Central NSW Councils (Centroc)